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The transition to formal schooling is thought of as a critical educational experience for all children and their families. This transition may be especially critical for those in the largest immigrant group in the United States, Mexican families and their children. Using Critical Race Theory, the aim of the current study was to give Mexican immigrant parents a voice in their experiences and perspectives regarding their children's transition to school. Using two distinct phases, the current study examined Mexican immigrant parents' perspectives on and experiences with their children's transition to kindergarten. In the first phase, information from interviews with 7 Mexican immigrant parents and feedback from an expert panel were used to revise the Family Experiences and Involvement in Transition (FEIT) survey (McIntyre et al, 2007), with the intent of making it more culturally sensitive and relevant, and a better reflection of Mexican families' perspectives and experiences. In the second phase of the study, 44 Mexican immigrant parents completed the newly adapted FEIT (FEIT-A) measure, providing some initial data about its utility, relevance, and psychometric properties. Implications of use of the FEIT-A for schools, communities, and practitioners are discussed.

Keywords: transition to school, Mexican immigrants, mixed methods

GIVING VOICES TO MEXICAN IMMIGRANT PARENTS:
A MIXED METHODS STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS
ON THE TRANSITION TO SCHOOL

by

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To my husband, Darren, for always supporting me and for constantly reminding me of my capabilities as a scholar and as an individual. Without his confidence in me, I would not be where I am today. And to my beautiful, spunky, Carmelina, life would not be the same without you.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The transition to formal schooling (i.e., K-12) is a key educational experience for both children and their families. It is often the first experience with the American school system for immigrant children and their families and this first experience can set the tone for children's academic success. When the transition to school is perceived as being successful, children feel more positive about school and parents are more involved as partners in their children's education (Malsch, Green, & Kothari, 2011; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 1999). This transition may be an even more critical experience especially for non-white and non-native children who tend to be more socially -disadvantaged (Crosnoe, 2006). A vast amount of literature suggests that different groups need different strategies and best practices to promote children and families' successful transition to school (Mangione & Speth, 1998; Malsch, Green, & Kothari, 2011). Changing demographics in our society and educational system mean that transition best practices must also accommodate immigrant families and their children. In particular, Latino children are quickly becoming the largest minority; by the year 2030, it is predicted that 1 in 4 children (26%) in the United States will be Latino (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2007). One Latino group, Mexicans, form the largest immigrant group in the United States, accounting for 30% of immigrants in the 2000 Census (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

This demographic shift will invariably affect major societal institutions and thus questions around the implications of this demographic shift specifically for school transition are of much concern.

Given no evidence that transition best practices are either positive or negative for immigrant families, particularly Mexican immigrant families, a huge gap is present in the literature. The assessment of transition practices is particularly important for children in immigrant families as parents' views and practices on the transition to school may vary from American-born parents' views, who might be already familiar with the American school system. In addition, activities regarding the transition to school may be uniquely important to immigrant families as schools may be less prepared to support immigrant families. Therefore, there is a need for more research in this area and in particular a need for a valid and relevant measure to assess immigrant families' experiences with the transition to school.

A strengths-based perspective for children of Mexican immigrants posits that the educational system should take advantage of the diverse backgrounds and resources that these immigrant families have to offer. The present study addresses the gaps in the literature by examining Mexican immigrant families' experiences during the transition to school. Specifically, the purpose of this study is twofold. First, one of the aims of this proposed project is to describe the attitudes, beliefs, experiences, challenges, and needs that Mexican immigrant parents face when confronted with the American school system during their children's transition to school. The second aim of this proposed project is to utilize the information gained in the first phase of the study to revise the *Family*

Experiences and Involvement in Transition (FEIT) (McIntyre et al., 2007) to be more culturally sensitive and culturally relevant and to better reflect Mexican families' perspectives on and experiences with their child's the transition to school.

The FEIT was first designed to investigate family perspectives regarding their child's kindergarten transition preparation. According to McIntyre et al. (2007), the 57 items on the survey were rationally derived and covered the following five domains: 1) child educational history, 2) family concerns regarding the transition, 3) family identified needs during transition, 4) family involvement in transition activities, and 5) family sociodemographic information. McIntyre and colleagues then revised the FEIT to include 72 items by adding 4 items to the child educational history section, 1 item to the family concerns section, 3 items to the family involvement section, and 7 items to the family sociodemographic section. There were 86 parents of general education kindergarten students that completed the survey. Participants were majority mothers who were White (81%) and were married or living with their partners (76%). Approximately a third (31%) of the participants held a bachelor's degree and approximately one – quarter (28%) were low income. Because this sample was overwhelmingly White and with high levels of income, it is unknown if the FEIT is appropriate for use with Mexican immigrants. Thus, the current study aimed to develop a revision of the FEIT in order reach a larger audience using survey methods and also to be more appropriate for Mexican immigrants. In conclusion, the proposed study will be a mixed methods measurement development study.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The beginning of school is a hallmark event that can break racial and ethnic barriers that are present in American society. Considering that “the transition to elementary school is a ground zero for inequality...[thus,] education is a powerful tool for both reducing and reinforcing such inequality” (Crosnoe, 2006). The present study is grounded in the theoretical perspective of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which centralizes race as the basis for inequality in our society. The theory has five different tenets that can be applied to understanding the experiences of Mexican immigrant families during the transition to school. The following section will describe the theory in detail as well as review the five main tenets and discuss how they relate to the topic of the experiences of Mexican immigrant families and their children during the school transition.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory is a perspective that can be applied to understanding the experiences of immigrant families and their children. The theory can help to understand the inequality that is present in all aspects of our society, including in the transition to school process. According to Ladson-Billings (1999), Critical Race Theory is an important tool that can help with the “deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially

just relations of power” (p.10). Race is central to the theory rather than being a minor factor in explaining the experiences of immigrants. In Critical Race Theory, race is not biological, natural, nor objective. Rather, race is a fluid, subjective, socially determined concept with historical significance (Burton et al., 2010; Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011). There are several significant tenets of this theoretical perspective that will be described and applied to the topic of Mexican immigrant families’ experiences with the transition to school. The first is that race is socially constructed. Second, race is ingrained in society. Third, Critical Race Theory aims for social justice and fourth, Critical Race Theory aims to give a voice to marginalized individuals. A fifth tenet involves the use of storytelling and narratives to give minorities a voice in a society with a White perspective.

Tenets of Critical Race Theory

Race is socially constructed. Rather than being biological in nature, Critical Race Theory proponents argue that race is socially constructed (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010; Ortiz & Jani, 2010; Zamudio et al., 2011). Often, race is determined by the dominant group and is reflected through society’s values and laws with an aim to promote and protect the dominant group’s interests (Ortiz & Jani, 2010). Society therefore defines who is considered an “other” or who is segregated from the dominant group and more often than not, immigrant families and their children are the “others” in society. By being defined by society’s ideals and laws, immigrants may internalize their race and it may become “embedded in the psyche of society and its members and serves as an internal and social measuring stick to evaluate oneself and

others in terms of various social ‘norms’” (Ortiz & Jani, 2010, p.179). Immigrants will use their socially constructed racial backgrounds and experiences in new situations to help them interpret and create new meanings and values for themselves. During the transition to school, Mexican immigrants might not participate in many transition activities because the transition practices reflect only the dominant group’s values and interests.

Two examples of how race is socially constructed are through micro aggressions and macro aggressions. Micro aggressions refer to “covert and not so covert actions directed at persons usually without overt malicious intent” (Ortiz & Jani, 2010, p.179). An example of how micro aggressions are present during the transition to school is when school staff require registration paperwork to be filled out by parents only in the English language. Although this may not be intentional, school staff should make an effort to communicate with the parents of immigrant children in their language of choice as well as in the communication style that is most culturally relevant. Some parents might prefer to receive a phone call or have a face-to-face meeting rather than just being handed paperwork to fill out. Macro aggressions on the other hand, refer to “affronts that are not necessarily directed at a specific person but at a group” (Ortiz & Jani, 2010, p.180). An example of a macro aggression would be when schools create a subgroup of Latinos and average their Kindergarten screening assessment scores to get an idea of whether or not children of Mexican descent are “ready” for Kindergarten. Both micro and macro aggressions are examples of how race is socially constructed and examples of both would be useful to reflect on and apply in school transition best practices.

Racism is considered normal, is institutionalized, and is deeply ingrained in society's systems. As part of Critical Race Theory, racism is argued to be deeply embedded within society and its structures, commonly found in American society, and operates daily within the interrelated systems of society (Giles & Hughes, 2009). Cole (2009) posited that there can be different ways that racism can manifest itself in society. Racism can be overt (calling an immigrant a derogatory name), covert (muttering a derogatory name), dominative (having oppressive policies), and aversive (segregating immigrants). The American educational system perpetuates racism and actually makes race more salient through its practices (Cooper, Garcia Coll, Thorne, & Orellana, 2005), thus impacting the early school experiences of immigrant children and their families. Racism can be viewed in the school context through curriculum programs, instructional practices, assessments, and even school transition activities. Critical Race Theory argues that these mechanisms all operate under the idea that immigrant children are inferior and should adapt to the school context that is inherently embedded with White, middle-class values. Inequality in school funding is also a source of racism according to Ladson-Billings (1999). Early childhood programs and schools that are embedded within immigrant communities might not get as much funding as more privileged all White schools. The lack of funding for schools in immigrant communities only reinforces racism and implicitly teaches immigrant children that they are not as valued as their White counterparts.

Other forms of racial inequality can also be found in the school transition practices. With no empirical research on exploring the experiences, needs, and barriers of

Mexican immigrant families on the transition to school, school transition practices almost inevitably reflect the beliefs and values of White, middle-class families. Additionally, subtle reminders of racial inequality are present in the school enrollment paperwork of schools as immigrant families are asked to check their race and ethnicity. Moreover, paperwork is typically in the dominant language of English thus making it more difficult for immigrants who may not speak English or may be illiterate to fill out the forms. Language programs and tracking of immigrant children can make racial differences more evident as well (Cooper et al., 2005) as some immigrant children might be tracked throughout their educational journey while others may not due to characteristics associated with their race. Another subtle reminder of the inequalities in the school system is the visuals that are present in schools in the form of bulletin boards, signs, and school rituals. For example, a school bulletin board might have pictures of families with different skin colors hanging on the wall. These pictures, although potentially with good intention, highlight race rather than ability.

Commitment to social justice. Critical Race Theory aims to give marginalized individuals a “voice” and is committed to social justice. The goal of Critical Race Theory is to assist marginalized individuals by changing the structures that are the sources of racism. In Critical Race Theory, it is important to honor and acknowledge the perspective of marginalized individuals and then use this knowledge to change policies and practices that are sources of racism for immigrant children. Because of Critical Race Theory’s previous history with Critical Legal Studies, changing laws and policies to support immigrants and reduce racism is of utmost priority. Critical Race Theory is not just a

passive theory, but rather can be described as a movement for social justice (Zamudio et al., 2011). This tenet is critical to the success of immigrant children as it fights to change the systems of racism. This commitment is evident through current research suggesting that immigrant families and their children have strengths that educators should acknowledge, celebrate, and integrate into the educational system. Additionally, dual language programs in early childhood education and elementary education are more prevalent suggesting that policies and systems can be impacted through a commitment to social justice. These dual language programs both directly and indirectly affect immigrant children. The programs affect them directly as they are able to participate in these programs and learn in an environment that supports their home language. The programs can affect immigrant children indirectly as the values and ideas behind the programs suggest that more than one language is valued in our society. Schools can be agents of change in the movement for social justice by providing school transition activities that can meet the needs of various cultural groups, including Mexican immigrant families and their children.

Advancing the voice of the marginalized. Critical Race Theory proposes that it is important to capture and share the story of marginalized individuals rather than always taking the perspective of how White, middle-class individuals see race and minorities. Working to understand the subjective truth becomes vital from a Critical Race Theory perspective according to Ortiz and Jani (2010). Critical Race Theory rejects the idea of color-blindness (Giles & Hughes, 2009; Ross, 2010), which is the idea that individuals should be treated equally without regarding their race. On the contrary, Critical Race

Theory places race as the central component and instead aims to focus on understanding and advancing the perspectives of individuals marginalized due to their race. One of the strengths of this particular tenet is that immigrant families' race and culture will not be ignored but rather will be acknowledged, understood, and possibly even integrated into school transition best practices. This tenet emphasizes that immigrants and their experiences and cultures should be viewed from a strengths-based perspective rather than from a deficit perspective in which they are compared to "superior" White individuals. This can be applied to school transition best practices as finding the voices of Mexican immigrant families will allow educators and policymakers to understand the perspectives of immigrant children and their families in order to best help them have a successful transition to school.

Use of narratives and storytelling. One goal of Critical Race Theory is to bring about the objective perspective of marginalized individuals such as immigrants. In order to capture the perspectives of marginalized individuals, a variety of research methods can be used such as narratives, storytelling, or counter-storytelling. Counter-storytelling is a "method of capturing the narratives of people of color that highlights their voices and experiences. Thus, it challenges the characterization of the dominant culture's master narrative as the norm" (Ortiz & Jani, 2010, p.186). Counter-storytelling is a method that can provide thick description as well as antiracist views on immigrant experiences while exposing majority views that perpetuate racism (Giles & Hughes, 2010; Morgan, 2011). Additionally through counter-storytelling and even narratives, immigrants can be humanized and even valued for the unique experiences they share. Critical Race Theory

posits that using narratives or storytelling can be helpful to provide immigrants with a means of self- preservation and a political expression of power relationships found in society (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Zamudio et al., 2011). Using narratives or storytelling can help the listener or reader minimize ethnocentrism and understand the immigrants' point of views from an antiracist perspective rather than from the more objective majority perspective (Zamudio et al., 2011). Additionally, these stories by minorities "can catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar dysconscious racism" (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p.16).

Using stories and narratives can be applied to inform school transition teams as they are creating and revising transition activities and practices for the purpose of sharing the experiences of the immigrant and minority children that they will be serving during the transition to school and in the classrooms. Critical Race Theory aims to tell the stories from an immigrant viewpoint, which can thus give educators the tools such as knowledge necessary to challenge current inequalities in the transition to school practices that privilege a dominant majority (Zamudio et al., 2011). Although Critical Race Theory aims to tell stories of marginalized individuals, this does not always work to change current inequalities. Critical Race Theory can only be successful in the use of narratives and storytelling if listeners begin to question their own subjectivities as a result of hearing the narratives or stories of immigrants. Pease (2010) posited that this is not only important to "understand their experience of oppression, but also to learn about their ways of perceiving the world and whites within it" (p.126).

Implications of Critical Race Theory for the current study. In sum, Critical Race Theory posits that the cultural beliefs and values of Mexican immigrant families

can influence their experiences with the transition to school. Thus, just being a racial minority in the United States can pose a potential risk to the development of young children of color (Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 2000). Critical Race Theory advocates that the early school experiences of Mexican immigrant families and their children of color can be greatly influenced if immigrant families are given a voice through narratives or story telling and if there is a strong commitment to social justice. The current study is grounded in the tenets of Critical Race Theory and aims to give Mexican immigrant families a voice in their experiences during the transition to school.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The current review summarizes three relevant areas of literature. First, the literature on best practices during the transition to school as well as challenges in achieving successful transitions will be discussed. Second, research on the role that culture plays on parents' perceptions on education will be explored. Finally, the links between Mexican immigrant parental values and beliefs and the transition to school will be reviewed.

Transition Best Practices, Challenges, and the Family

The transition to school is viewed as an important milestone in children's lives. Not only are children affected during the transition process, but families are also affected through their involvement in this transition process. During the transition to Kindergarten, children and their families encounter new relationships, roles, cultures, opportunities, and responsibilities (Malsch, Green, & Kothari, 2011). When the transition to school is perceived as being successful, children feel more positive about school and parents are more involved as partners in their children's education (Malsch, Green, & Kothari, 2011; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 1999). The importance of this transition is stated by Crosnoe (2006), who suggested that this transition represents a critical jumping off point for the lives of children especially for non-white and non-native children who tend to be

more socially-disadvantaged (Crosnoe, 2006). Moreover, this transition becomes especially poignant for the children of Mexican immigrants who are historically underperforming in schools. For Mexican immigrant parents especially, “the school is the first extrafamilial context of childhood” (Crosnoe & Cooper, 2009, p.261) to which they are exposed. Thus, the issue of whether or not schools are meeting immigrant families’ needs with their transition practices is crucial to their future involvement and their children’s academic success. This study aims to give Mexican immigrants a voice, by assessing their perspectives on whether or not school transition best practices are meeting their needs. Further motivation for the present study is offered by Crosnoe and Cooper (2009) who argue that schools can serve as a buffer against the negative effects of stressors that immigrant families invariably face.

Transition Best Practices

There is some agreement in the literature about transition best practices. La Paro, Kraft-Sayre, and Pianta (2003) discussed the idea that transition activities should be centered on the four areas of family-school connections, child-school connections, peer connections, and community connections. The first area, the family-school connection, is a reoccurring theme in the literature on best transition practices. Family-school connections could include school orientations/registrations, meeting with parents to discuss issues related to the transition, and such special events as before school picnics. Family-school connections acknowledge that the family plays a crucial and irreplaceable role in the transition to school.

One theoretical model that acknowledges the important role that families play is well-recognized in the literature and is called the Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 1999). This model of Kindergarten Transition suggests that the various contexts, such as the family and school contexts and relationships within and between those contexts matter and can influence how children adjust to the transition and to school. The Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition emphasizes the importance of links between children and families in transition. It suggests that the relationship between family and school can support a child through the transition and that these connections “serve as a bridge from preschool to Kindergarten and can help a child and family in this adjustment” (Kraft-Sayre & Pianta, 2000, p.3). This important recommendation to make sure that families are partners during the process is also shared by Mangione and Speth (1998). An underlying assumption of this recommendation is that families cannot do everything on their own and will need support from the community and the school. Links between families, schools, and communities should be evident at all times and should be present over time throughout the life of the child. Together, families and schools should partner and make decisions in the best interest of children. Another underlying assumption of family-centered transition practices is that services should be consistent with the home culture, including communication using the family’s home language (Mangione & Speth, 1998). This assumption requires schools and those designing transition practices to be aware and have knowledge of families’ values and the beliefs. This assumption requires schools and

policymakers to be less ethnocentric and to be aware of any micro aggressions that unintentionally institutionalize racism during the transition to school.

Other transition practices suggest that activities should focus on key dimensions to help families and their children make a smooth transition to school. A study by Malsch, Green, and Kothari (2011) showed that transition activities in general tend to focus on the three key dimensions of 1) providing information, 2) emotional support and encouragement, and 3) active empowerment of parents to act as advocates for their children. Schools can provide information as well as emotional support by allowing families to visit the school and discuss any concerns or questions with school staff. In fact, research has suggested that the earlier families have opportunities to visit the school and speak with their child's teacher, the more welcome families will feel, thus impacting their transition experience and potentially their further school involvement (Kreider, 2002). Thus, the timing of transition practices and activities offered is another crucial factor that can greatly impact families' experiences with the transition to school. With immigrant families who may face larger stressors and who may have vastly different cultural values, the timing of transition activities may be even more important. Yet, almost nothing is known about whether or not these three dimensions are also key for Mexican immigrant families whose cultural values and beliefs may differ. More generally, do these transition best practices also hold for Mexican immigrant families? The present study will address this gap in the literature by capturing the stories of Mexican immigrant parents and then incorporating their stories into the revision of the FEIT.

Early childhood programs can be one positive resource link for families during the transition process (La Paro, Kraft-Sayre, & Pianta, 2003). With involvement in early childhood programs, families are able to communicate with teachers about their questions and concerns regarding the move to Kindergarten. Families of children who attend an early childhood education program are more likely to be exposed to, and therefore involved in, transition practices (Wildenger & McIntyre, 2011). For example, early childhood programs such as Head Start have been found to provide critical information (what to expect in the Kindergarten setting) and logistical information (i.e. when and how to register) regarding the transition to Kindergarten. Findings from Ramey et al. (1998) showed that the majority of children and parents that participated in the Head Start program in their sample had positive experiences and perceptions of the transition to school. Additional findings from La Paro et al. (2003) revealed that families with children enrolled in preschool programs found transition activities that they participated in to be helpful. It is possible that early childhood programs serve to assist in a more smooth transition to school. Moreover, schools traditionally have not been as family-centered as the early childhood field, which poses a potential barrier to the successful transition experiences for children and families that have not participated in early childhood programs. If the children of Mexican immigrants are not able to access early childhood programs or at access them at the same level as other families, will they be at a disadvantage? The current project aims to examine Mexican immigrant parents' experiences during their children's transition to school and whether these vary according to participation in early childhood education.

Challenges to Successful Transitions to School

Research has identified many potential barriers to family involvement during the transition to school (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2007; McIntyre et al., 2007; La Paro, Kraft-Sayre, & Pianta, 2003). Barriers include parents' work schedules, language differences, transportation issues, lack of child care, motivation/interest, other factors associated with poverty, as well as a history of negative experiences in the school setting (Malsch, Green, & Kothari, 2011). There are also many other factors that are unique to immigrant parents and families that can affect their experiences with the transition to school.

Hernandez, Denton, and Macartney (2007) identify several general challenges confronting immigrant parents and families, including: parents, especially fathers, not being able to work full-time year-round; parents' low-wages (i.e., earning less than twice the minimum wage); parents' low educational levels; parents' limited English proficiency; linguistically isolated households; family poverty; housing-cost burden; and overcrowded housing. These factors alone can make the transition to school an even more difficult process, but when coupled with cultural beliefs that may be different than those operating in the American school system, these unique challenges may make the transition to school confusing and challenging at best. The unique immigrant experience and its relation to the transition to school is a significantly understudied area. Very few studies have addressed the transition in American schools for typically developing non-immigrant children and even fewer have addressed the transition experience for Mexican immigrant children and their families.

Clear gaps in the literature suggest that there is still work to be done in this area to answer many questions concerning the transition to school for immigrant families, and Mexican immigrant families in particular. For example, are the transition strategies being widely recommended and practiced suitable for Mexican immigrant families? Are these strategies aligned with the values and beliefs of Mexican immigrant families? Do Mexican immigrant families experience the transition to school in the same way as White families? Do Mexican immigrant families have other needs and/or challenges that should be addressed in transition strategies? Despite the multitude of transition strategies and activities, Mexican immigrant families and their children can still have a difficult transition to kindergarten they transition from a different cultural context that has different demands and hidden rules. For example, a hidden rule in the U.S. educational system is that parents should be advocates for their children while being partners with the school. This suggests that families can and should advocate for what is best for their children rather than just passively allowing teachers and the school to do what they think is best. Through interviews and the development of a more culturally relevant FEIT, this study honors and acknowledges the unique perspectives of Mexican immigrant parents.

In spite of the many potential challenges faced by Mexican immigrant families, schools also face their own potential barriers in providing and implementing transition activities that are suggested by researchers as best practice. McIntyre et al. (2007) discussed such barriers as including lack of summer resources for teachers to prepare for the transition and the generation of class lists only a few weeks before school starts. Other limitations include the lack of empirical studies on the transition best practices with

typically developing children as indicated by Wildenger and McIntyre (2011). In addition, there is no research to indicate whether or not the transition best practices are relevant and appropriate for immigrant families and their children, specifically Mexican immigrants. In a study by Mangione and Speth (1998), surveyed elementary school staff members were in agreement about transition best practices being family-centered and partnering with the community as well. However, despite having positive intentions, staff implementing transition practices may not know what to do or how best to help Mexican immigrant families without having much prior knowledge on this cultural group. Thus, the present study examined Mexican immigrant parents' perspectives and needs during the transition to formal schooling in order to better inform schools.

Culture and Parents' Experiences and Perceptions

According to an ecological perspective, parents and children are located in the center of multiple systems that influence their development. The macrosystem culture (among other things) helps to "shape and determine, to a great extent, the immediate contexts experienced by children, the short-and long-term goals parents have for their children, and the practices parents employ in attempting to meet these goals" (Bornstein & Cheah, 2006, p.3). Rodriguez and Olswang (2003) suggested that parents from different cultures might differ in their beliefs and values because they are immersed and interacting in the center of multiple systems or contexts. These contexts include the home cultural context in the present as well as the historical and sociocultural context of their home culture. In addition, families that immigrate to the United States are influenced by the American culture that may or may not influence a change in their own cultural beliefs

and values. Culture inexplicably plays a role in shaping what parents believe and value and thus cannot be ignored. Understanding how culture affects the beliefs and values of parents and families can lead us to a greater understanding of how Mexican immigrant families in particular experience the transition to school.

Using carefully selected interview questions, the role of culture and parents' experiences and perceptions was explored. The present study will examine the attitudes, beliefs, experiences, challenges, and needs that Mexican immigrant families face when confronted with the American school system during the transition to school. There is no research on Mexican immigrant families' perspectives and beliefs on the transition to school; therefore it is important to expand our knowledge on this critical topic. The following section will review the existing literature on parents' perspectives and beliefs on child development and education with a focus on how culture shapes their views. Additionally, because this study is grounded in Critical Race Theory, the current study focuses on a strengths-based approach to advance the voices of Mexican immigrant parents. Rather than using a color-blind approach and rejecting race and culture as important factors contributing to parents' experiences and perceptions, the current study positions race and culture as central to the construction of parental beliefs. This section will also lay the groundwork for the rationale of why the current study will use a strengths-based approach to focus on Mexican immigrant families and their children.

Culture and the Construction of Beliefs and Perceptions

Research has shown that childrearing values can be influenced by culture (Arcia, Reyes-Blanes, & Vazquez-Montilla, 2000; Buriel, 1993; Carnoy, 2009). Culture

influences parents' beliefs and behaviors because with culture comes "norms, ideas, values, and assumptions about life that are shared by the people in a given society and that guide and regulate specific behaviors" (Bornstein & Cheah, 2006, p.15). Bornstein and Cheah (2006) argued that it is the parents' role to guide and relay the message to their children about what their culture deems as acceptable or unacceptable in order for their children to "survive and thrive."

It is important to consider socio-historical and cultural contexts when understanding the construction of parental beliefs particularly those of Mexican immigrants. Carnoy (2009) argued that education in Latin American countries is influenced by economic, social, and political contexts and in particular the distribution of resources or economic and social inequalities. Distribution of resources can refer to the concentration of students of a certain economic class in one school versus another and the quality (high versus low education) teachers in certain schools. Carnoy (2009) found that the more equal income distribution and the higher GDP/capita in a country, the higher students' average test scores. Mexican immigrant parents might have experienced some of the unequal distribution of resources in their own culture and thus their educational experiences might influence their parental beliefs on education, child development, and even their perspectives on the transition to school. Mexican immigrant parents who have experienced the inequality in the Mexican education system might refer to their experiences as a frame of reference when constructing their own beliefs. For example, Mexican immigrant parents might perceive the American school system to have the utmost authority on educating their children and then might choose to not be involved

with their children's education or with transition activities. Hence, it is important to acknowledge that social and cultural values may influence parental beliefs, especially if the social and cultural values could be different than those in America.

Other research has suggested that families and parents from a Mexican background strongly value aspects of social development for their children (Delgado & Ford, 1998; Buriel, 1993). Findings from Delgado and Ford (1998) revealed that three themes that were relevant to Mexican families. The three themes that emerged included family views and values related to parenting, developmental changes that are important for children, and experiences faced by immigrant parents with children growing up in the United States. In this study, parents believed that they were influential in social aspects of child development but not influential in physical development such as learning to talk or walk. Additional results found that parents portrayed a relaxed attitude about child rearing and encouraged independence and confidence in their children, which are important skills encouraging optimal learning in children. Buriel (1993) also found support that Mexican parents strongly believe in childrearing practices concerning social development. Findings suggested that immigrant mothers stressed similar childrearing practices such as earlier autonomy, productive use of time, strictness, and permissiveness (Buriel, 1993). Given these findings, Mexican parents might desire school transition practices that emphasize or highlight their children's social development.

More literature suggests that Mexican parents might hold agrarian values (Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995). Agrarian values include moral development such as valuing family and being respectful as opposed to being individualistic and

competitive (Reese et al., 1995). Findings by Reese et al. (1995) suggested that agrarian values as well as valuing academics were encompassed in the concept of educacion.

According to parents, the concept of educacion included learning the difference between right and wrong, respecting parents and others, and having correct behavior (Reese et al., 1995). Parents tried to teach their children to follow the right path in life, but parents also acknowledged that it was the children's decision whether or not to follow the right path. Additional findings from Reese et al. (1995) revealed that Mexican parents believed in corporal punishment, which is in conflict with the American school system belief against corporal punishment.

Lastly, some families in Reese et al. (1995) seemed to be combining their values into a new cultural type by merging agrarian values with the academic occupational model, a more academic focused model. The creation of a new cultural belief model implies that Mexican parents and families really do want what is best for their children even if that means modifying their own cultural beliefs. Mexican families might realize that their own cultural beliefs and practices might not be enough to help their children succeed in the American school system that has individualistic values and they may choose to shift their beliefs because they value education and the success of their children. Although research suggests Mexican parents may have different beliefs than European Americans, do they also have different experiences regarding the transition to school? Are their challenges and needs unique to them given their differing cultural beliefs, values, and experiences? Still regardless of any differences, it is important to acknowledge that Mexican immigrant families' perspectives do matter.

Critical Race Theory and Using Mexican Immigrant Families as Resources

Despite the literature claiming that Mexican parental beliefs about education are different than European American beliefs, Critical Race Theory argues that these differences should not be considered inferior or deficient, but rather should be acknowledged as unique and with the same goal of promoting children's school readiness and success. More specifically, Mexican parents' voices not only should be acknowledged, but they should be understood and even integrated into school transition practices.

Although some researchers and policymakers might advocate for examining families' experiences on the transition to school in all Latino families rather than just in one group of Latinos like Mexican immigrants, other research says the contrary. Arguments to study all Latinos as one group include the need to generalize and more broadly impact policies concerning school transition practices. However, the generalization of Mexican immigrants into the broader group of Latinos is evidence that race is socially constructed and is defined by the dominant group. In order to combat the racial inequality that is deeply engrained in schools and their transition practices, it is critical to explore parental beliefs within-group. By exploring phenomena within a group, the diversity that arises from generational and socio-cultural factors (Buriel, 1993) can be better understood. DeFeyter and Winsler (2009) also argued that within-group differences or intracultural differences in terms of nativity and generation should not be ignored. Broad labels such as "Latino" hold the assumption of homogeneity and ignore intracultural differences. One Latino group, Mexicans, form the largest immigrant group in

the United States accounting for 30% of immigrants in the 2000 Census (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Therefore, studying the parental beliefs and experiences in this large immigrant group has the potential to have a large impact on how our schools implement transition practices thus affecting the school success of children in our society.

Additionally, Critical Race Theory argues, Mexican immigrant parents have beliefs and values reflective of their culture and can be considered funds of knowledge or cultural resources thus influencing school transition best practices.

In addition to examining within-group differences, it is also critical to use a strengths-based lens rather than a deficit thinking lens. According to Critical Race Theory, it is important to advance the voices of the marginalized and share their unique voices to break down racial inequality. In a racially and ethnically stratified society, we owe it to our children, families, schools, and communities to acknowledge that the beliefs and perspectives of families from other cultures do matter.

With an increasingly diverse population of parents and children in our country, the possibility to ensure school success for all children is less and less likely given cultural differences that exist between educators and families such as background experiences, values, language, behaviors, and resources. Often, minority families and their children are viewed from a deficit thinking perspective and are treated differently in the school context (Olivos, 2004; Valencia & Black, 2002). This negative treatment affects the school success of minority children and can greatly damage home-school relationships, which are important to children's school success (Decker & Decker, 2003). This negative treatment can begin early in the school career as families and children

transition into the American school system and may begin even before the school year starts, thus leaving a lasting negative impression with Latino families about the nature of the school. For Mexican immigrant parents, the school system may be one of the first American institutions they come into contact with, thus it becomes even more crucial for schools to ensure they are meeting their needs. The current study acknowledges and affirms that Mexican immigrant families' beliefs and values are just as important as other parents' beliefs and values. This must be done in order to fight for social justice, to best inform practice, and to advocate for *all* children and families regardless of race and ethnicity.

Some research exists that attempts to counter the idea that Mexican parental beliefs on childrearing and education are far inferior to the parental beliefs of European Americans (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Valencia & Black, 2002). Reasons that Mexican parental beliefs have been seen as inferior include viewpoints such as cultural deprivation, the "at-risk" child and parent, and an "other" category. The "other" category is shaped by a deficit thinking perspective and includes the lower graduation rates and lower academic achievement of Latino students (Valencia & Black, 2002). These viewpoints provide evidence that race is socially constructed and promotes the dominant group's interests (Ortiz & Jami, 2010). Furthermore, these viewpoints reinforce enhance stereotypes of Mexican parents and their beliefs and do not consider the role that culture plays in influencing Mexican parents' experiences and perspectives. Delgado-Gaitan (1992) challenged the idea that Mexican families lack motivation and are ignorant about how to be involved in their children's education. Findings from the Delgado-Gaitan

(1992) study revealed the opposite, that Mexican-American parental beliefs reflected significant motivation and understanding of their children's education. Mexican-American parents reported that they believed in constructing the home environment to include physical resources, emotional climate, and interpersonal interactions that would promote their children's readiness for school. Physical resources included materials, visual stimulation, and physical arrangement of the environment (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992). Emotional climate was defined to include the emotional relationships within the environment as well as family members' expectations for children's school experience. In these households, findings suggested that parents provided their children with the emotional support to value education (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992). Lastly, the concept of interpersonal interactions included children's literacy opportunities and interactions with family members relating to school experiences such as explanation and indirect teaching. Clearly, it seemed that Mexican parents believed in the importance of education but may have just acted on their beliefs differently than European American parents. These findings suggest that Mexican parents and families already value the role that the family plays in children's education and in the transition to school.

Valencia and Black (2002) also challenged this deficit perspective and found evidence that Latino parents are involved in their children's education suggesting they value education. If parents were not involved externally (at school) with their children's education, then they were involved internally (at home) (Valencia & Black, 2002). Again, the results from this study demonstrated that Mexican parents value education because of their involvement (Valencia & Black, 2002). Moreover, Mexican parents may be

uninvolved in their children's education, not because they do not believe it is important, but rather due to factors in the school context (i.e. how welcoming to diversity, availability of interpreters, etc.). Future research should aim to understand how culture affects families' perceptions and experiences of the school transition before assuming a deficit perspective. Findings from Delgado-Gaitan (1992) and Valencia and Black (2002) challenge us to think about providing Mexican immigrant parents with a means for expression and sharing their stories with others, which the current study aims to do.

Some parents, particularly Mexican immigrant parents, might try to counteract this deficit-thinking perspective by helping their children acculturate to the American school system. They may believe acculturation is the key to their children's academic success and thus may gather knowledge on the American school system to guide their children in the acculturation process. Rather than thinking about these children and families as being at-risk, it is important to understand their perspective as they acculturate to a school system that might be very different from what they are used to. It is also critical to view minority parents positively and as being unique resources that can add to an understanding and ultimately more effective teaching of the minority children. Therefore, a central issue that this study will address is that Mexican immigrant parents families are under-utilized resources and connections to their children. By interviewing and then surveying Mexican immigrant parents, this study advocates for the acknowledgement and understanding of Mexican immigrant parents' experiences and perspectives concerning their children's transition to kindergarten.

Mexican Immigrants' Experiences with the Transition to School

There has been a lack of research exploring the experiences of Mexican immigrant families as they transition their children to the American school system. If Mexican immigrants' beliefs do not match up with the American school system values, what are the consequences? Should Mexican parents change their beliefs to be more reflective of the American school system? A conflict or mismatch may occur when parents' cultures define their beliefs in a certain way that is different from the culture they are actually immersed in such as the American culture. For example, Mexican parents have beliefs (and therefore behaviors) that are guided by their Mexican culture but that may be in juxtaposition with what European Americans believe. It is unknown whether or not school transition practices conflict with Mexican immigrants' beliefs, which the present study will address.

A couple of solutions have been offered in the literature for this potential mismatch. DeFeyter and Winsler (2009) discussed assimilation theory which suggests that Mexican parents will struggle at first but then will assimilate their beliefs to the American school system values. This theory assumes Mexican parents desire to change and adapt to the mainstream culture and assumes this transition is unidirectional. However, it is also possible that Mexican immigrant parents may not want to assimilate to the American culture, but only feel forced to without any support from schools or the communities in which they reside. Yet, if Mexican parental beliefs differ drastically from the values of the American school system, this could have serious consequences for the children of these Mexican parents. Children's readiness skills could suffer if their

parents' beliefs are not well-aligned to the American school system values. The consequences of this mismatch were revealed in a study by DeFeyter and Winsler (2009) where children in a non-immigrant group had higher cognitive and language skills than children from immigrant families.

Another solution for this potential mismatch in cultural beliefs is that one side makes an accommodation for the other side. For example, when Mexican immigrants' beliefs may experience a shift in their beliefs based on their experience with the American school system, they can assimilate as described previously. However, Sigel (1985) argued that if there is a clash in beliefs between two parties (i.e. families and school system) an accommodation might be necessary in order for children to be successful in school. But this accommodation does not necessarily need to be from the side of the parents and families. The American school system can and should accommodate the increasing diversity of children in its schools. Hiatt-Michael (2008) warns that this may be extremely challenging given the history of the American school system. Hiatt-Michael (2008) discussed the history of the American school system and how it has been shaped by economic, political, and societal factors. The American school system was established in the 1800's and the structure and system are still reflected in today's educational system, which unfortunately does not account for and take into consideration the diversity in students in the status quo. This is evidence of the second tenet of Critical Race Theory, which suggests that racism is considered normal, is institutionalized, and is deeply engrained in today's educational system. Unfortunately it seems that "governmental policy seems to be ignoring current social realities of families

in America. The changing demographics of families and communities are seldom considered by schools that operate within a structure and system established in 1800s” (Hiatt-Michael, 2008, p.60). In order for Mexican and other culturally diverse children to have success in school, the American school system needs to take into consideration the needs, values, and beliefs of different cultural groups, like Mexican immigrant parents. Central to Critical Race Theory is the idea that we must be committed to social justice and to changing the educational system that is embedded with racism. One way of moving in the right direction is for research such as the current study to share the subjective truth and move towards informing transition practices.

A final solution to the mismatch between Mexican parental beliefs and what the American school system emphasizes is to “agree to disagree.” This mismatch in cultural values could serve to be a strong point for and highly benefit Mexican immigrant families and their children. For example, due to the Mexican parental beliefs emphasizing social development, children from immigrant families were reported to have fewer behavior concerns and were reported to have more initiative, self-control, and attachment to adults (DeFeyter & Winsler, 2009). Reese et al. (1995) suggested that the agrarian values that Mexican parents hold might actually be complementary to the school values and will help children adapt and succeed in the American school system. Schools can learn more about the Mexican immigrants’ beliefs and values and create differentiated and individualized transition practices for this specific growing population. Additionally, learning more about Mexican immigrant families’ values, beliefs, and experiences can be used to inform practices and policies regarding the transition to school. Despite a potential mismatch,

schools can be the context in which culturally diverse children and their families can attain a common culture that can contribute and promote the readiness and school success of all children. Schools can fight for social justice for Mexican immigrant parents by merely listening to what they have to say and by acknowledging that their beliefs are important as well.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

A notable limitation in the research examining parents' experiences of their child's transition to school is the absence of information on how Latino families and their children experience the transition to the American school system. The current study sought to address this gap and contributes to the literature in several ways. First, this study focuses specifically on Mexican immigrant families given the need to move beyond the pan-ethnic category of Latinos and to address the significant size and growth of this particular population. Secondly, with the research in this area on the transition to school, there is an absence of a psychometrically sound measurement tool in general. Relatedly, there exists a need for a culturally sensitive measure that can provide information about transition experiences from the perspective of culturally diverse families and children. The primary goal of this study then was to develop a culturally sensitive and culturally relevant measure that is reflective of Mexican immigrant families' perspectives on and experiences with their children's transition to school. The development process for this measure included a review of the existing *Family Experiences and Involvement in Transition* (FEIT) measure (McIntyre et al., 2007), a review of the literature, data gathered from qualitative interviews with Mexican immigrant families, consultation with experts in the field, and a pilot test of the adapted measure, the FEIT-A. The specific questions guiding this study are as follows:

RQ 1: What are the critical dimensions of the transition process reported by Mexican immigrant parents that should be included in a measure of their perspectives and experiences with this process?

RQ 2: What aspects of the *Family Experiences and Involvement in Transition* (FEIT) measure (McIntyre et al., 2007) need to be revised or extended to appropriately capture the experiences and perspectives of Mexican immigrant parents?

RQ 3: What are the psychometric properties of the revised questionnaire, the FEIT-A?

RQ 4: For Mexican immigrant families, does participation in an early childhood program prior to kindergarten predict different transition experiences as measured by the FEIT-A?

- H4.1 Mexican immigrant families whose children have participated in an early childhood program (i.e. child care center, a public NC Pre-K, or Head Start) program will report having fewer concerns and higher levels of satisfaction regarding the transition to school.

CHAPTER V

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This project incorporates two sequential phases of data collection using an exploratory sequential mixed methods design. The purpose of an exploratory sequential design is to collect data from a few individuals and then generalize these qualitative findings to a larger sample in the second phase. Thus, the first phase can inform the second phase of research. Creswell and Clark (2011) discussed how this type of mixed methods design is helpful for several reasons including when “1) measures or instruments are not available; 2) the variables are unknown; or 3) there is no guiding framework or theory” (p.86). When no measures or instruments are available that are relevant to the study topic, *instrument-development variant*, a strand of exploratory design, can be used. With instrument-development variant, the preliminary qualitative phase helps to gather information to build a quantitative instrument in the second, prioritized phase (Creswell & Clark, 2011). This type of exploratory design suggests that using observations or interviews can help researchers discover new factors affecting a topic and then this information can be used to create questionnaires that can help to confirm associations (Axinn & Pearce, 2006). In the case of the proposed project, exploratory sequential design with an instrument-development strand is a good fit as there are no known

measures to assess Mexican immigrant parents' perspectives and experiences regarding their child's transition to the American school system. Additionally, the concepts or topics most relevant to Mexican immigrant families' transition experiences are relatively unknown.

Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to a) explore the attitudes, beliefs, experiences, challenges, and needs that Mexican immigrant parents face when confronted with the American school system during their children's transition to school and b) to utilize the information gained in the first phase of the study to create a culturally relevant survey measure of Mexican immigrant parents' perspectives and experiences that can be used more widely than qualitative-based assessments. In contrast to interviews, surveys can be distributed more widely at schools and require less contact with researchers. On the other hand, interviews require more contact time and therefore are not as cost efficient as survey methods.

The present study included two phases utilizing a mixed methods design. In the first phase, a phenomenological approach was used to collect qualitative data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven Mexican immigrant mothers of children who had just finished Kindergarten, which asked them to reflect back on their child's transition to school one year earlier. Interview data were then analyzed and used to develop a culturally relevant measure of Mexican immigrant parents' perspectives on the transition to school by adapting and extending an existing measure of transition experiences (FEIT; McIntyre et al. 2007). Four professionals with expertise in the areas of cultural diversity, kindergarten transition measurement development, Mexican

immigrant families, and the Mexican language and culture reviewed the adapted questionnaire and it was then further revised based on their suggestions. The second phase of the study included piloting the questionnaire with a sample of Mexican immigrant parents of children who recently started Kindergarten and therefore were in the midst of the transition. Moreover, the second phase of the study included utilizing researcher memo notes to reflect back on the specifics of quantitative methodology.

Benefits of Mixed Methods Approach

The mixed methods approach used in this study has several benefits. Using a phase of qualitative methods to understand process makes sense as process is a concept that is difficult to understand and is difficult to conceptualize in a standardized measure. Understanding the processes and dimensions of parents' experiences with their children's transition would not be as feasible without using mixed methods methodology. The beliefs, attitudes, and processes that are driving parents' behaviors, especially Mexican immigrant parents, differ from what is suggested by the literature and previous research with mostly Caucasian samples and therefore it is important to use qualitative methodologies for the discovery component. Quantitative methodology in a second phase of research would assist in generalizing some of the findings in order to inform practices related to school transition. Thus, an advantage of mixed methods research is that it can incorporate both exploratory and confirmatory research (Palinkas et al., 2011).

Other reasons for utilizing a mixed methods approach include factors relating to practicality and feasibility. Rather than doing two separate studies that would require two IRB's, two sources of funding, and two research proposals, using a mixed methods study

seems both practical and feasible. Thomas (2003) suggests that “both methods are supplementary, not dominant” (p.7), noting that the issue is not whether or not one type of method is superior to another, but rather which method or methods can appropriately answer the question the researcher is seeking. In the current study, mixed methods seem well-suited to the research questions guiding the project, and provide the opportunity for insights that go above and beyond those possible with the use of just qualitative or quantitative alone (Castro, Kellison, Boyd, & Kopak, 2010).

Phenomenological Approach

For the first qualitative phase of this study, I used a phenomenological approach, given my interest in better understanding how Mexican immigrant parents experience and perceive the transition to kindergarten. My desire was not simply to understand how the transition to kindergarten was perceived. Rather, my focus was on how Mexican immigrant parents experienced the phenomena of the transition to kindergarten. According to Wolff (1999), “Phenomenology focuses on lived experience. It looks at people’s everyday experiences of phenomena and how these experiences are structured, focusing the analysis on the perspective of the individual experiencing the phenomenon” (p. 220). Said differently, the experiences offered from the perspectives of Mexican immigrant parents were the focus of our investigation. Through an analysis of the themes and concepts that emerged from the participants’ responses, I sought to better understand the essence of the parents’ experiences with the transition to kindergarten as Mexican immigrants. As Wolff (1999) further asserts, “Phenomenology thus attends to how people experience phenomena existentially. The aim is to describe and interpret how the situated

body makes sense of phenomenon” (p. 220). I understand that people use language to articulate their experiences. To this end, I utilized a semi-structured interview to hear about and learn from the experiences of parent participants.

Researcher Subjectivity

Researchers need to be attentive to their own subjectivities and bias and I was conscious of my own subjectivities throughout the interview process, data collection process, and during data analysis (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005). During the interviews, I acknowledged that my own race and gender may have influenced the participants during the interview. Additionally, being a graduate student from a university as well as working for the school system, I was aware that my role in the interview might actually be perceived as one of an authority figure. Therefore, I was careful to be conscious of my behaviors, language, and even attire during the interview process. I attempted to be friendly, professional, and respectful with my behaviors and I attempted to use more conversational language instead of formal language. Moreover, I made sure that my attire reflected that of a professional, but not so formal that I would be thought of as a superior. Additionally, I express and identify with social justice ideology and advocacy, as such, the focus of the research and perhaps aspects of my interpretation might be influenced by my sensitivity to power structures, racism, and discrimination.

Participants

Four elementary schools in the Randolph County served as recruitment sites for the two parent samples used in this study. Randolph County is located in the Piedmont Triad area of North Carolina. Consisting of four cities and five towns, Randolph County

has an estimated population of 140,000. An estimated 80% of individuals that live in Randolph County are White, 10% are Hispanic, 6% are Black, 1% are Asian, 1% are American Indian/Native American and 1% are Mixed Race (Retrieved from http://www.city-data.com/county/Randolph_County-NC.html on 10/13/13). Randolph County School System is the largest of the two school systems in the County with 17 elementary schools. Four of the 17 elementary schools, Liberty, Ramseur, Randleman, and Southmont, were targeted by the researcher because they have the highest Hispanic populations in the Randolph County School System. The primary parent samples for both phases of this study were identified and obtained through Kindergarten teachers in these four elementary schools. For the expert sample, participants were obtained through the various sources. For Phase I, parents of self-identified Hispanic Kindergarten children at Liberty Elementary, Ramseur Elementary, Randleman Elementary, and Southmont Elementary were invited to participate in the study through a process described in more detail below.

Liberty Elementary (located in Liberty, NC) serves a small town and rural area and is an average size school in North Carolina, with a student population of approximately 494. Of the 78 Kindergarten students enrolled for the 2013-2014 school year, 59% are White, 26% are Hispanic, 8% are Black, and 6% are mixed race. Ramseur Elementary (located in Ramseur, NC) is a smaller school according to state averages, serving a population of 430 students from a small town and surrounding rural area. Of the 78 Kindergarten students enrolled at Ramseur for the 2013-2014 school year, 42% are White, 36% are Hispanic, 15% are Black, and 6% are mixed race. Randleman (located in

Randleman, NC) is a large school in small city. At 818 students, Randleman's population is much larger than the state average for elementary schools. Of the 145 current Kindergarten students, 62% are White, 32% are Hispanic, 2.5% are Black, 2.5% are mixed race, and 1% are Asian. Southmont Elementary (located in Asheboro, NC) is located in a relatively large city and serves a population of 579 students. Of the 99 Kindergarten students, 62% are White, 36% are Hispanic, 0% are Black, and 2% are mixed race. By sampling in these four elementary schools, the sample was representative of the Mexican population in Randolph County as families attending target schools reside in various areas all around the county.

Phase I Parent Sample

For the first phase of this project, parents that were first generation Mexican and whose children had just completed Kindergarten were identified through the Randolph County School staff including the ESL Program Liaison and parent educators based on their knowledge of the family to participate in interviews that aimed to describe the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs they have regarding their child's transition to the American school system. Staff identified families and contacted them via telephone to talk with them briefly about the study. Parents that were interested in being interviewed agreed for their contact information to be given to the researcher so she could contact them and tell them more about the study. The researcher contacted interested parents to verify their interest in participating in the first phase of the study. Once interest in participation was confirmed, she scheduled in-person interviews with the participants at a location and time of their choice.

Participation in the study was voluntary and participants were asked to reflect back on their child's transition one year earlier. In all, seven Mexican immigrant parents consented and participated in the qualitative phase of the study by completing in-depth interviews. Two interview participants had children that attended Liberty Elementary, two had children that attended Ramseur Elementary, two had children that attended Randleman Elementary, and one had child children that attended Southmont Elementary. Specific background information of each parent interview participant is described in more detail in below in Chapter VI.

Phase I Expert Sample

To assemble the panel of expert reviewers, the researcher along with her research committee brainstormed potential experts in the field such as academic professors, direct service providers, private consultants, and parents of young children. Once the list was narrowed down, the researcher contacted 5 experts via e-mail first to ask for their one-time participation to review a newly created questionnaire. One expert declined to participate but the other 4 experts agreed to participate. All experts responded to the e-mail sent and no follow-up regarding participation was needed.

Also for the first phase of the study, four experts provided feedback and suggestions on the newly revised measure. The first expert is an Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro who has expertise in assessment and measurement development. She is on the advising committee for this study and her race is Caucasian. The second expert has worked as a parent educator in Randolph County for 12 years. She educates and supports

a large Latino population in the Ramseur area of Randolph County through the Parents as Teachers program and is both Caucasian and bilingual. The third expert has worked as a teacher assistant, parent liaison, and interpreter with Randolph County Schools for over 10 years. She is based at Liberty Elementary School and she is a Mexican immigrant parent of one first grade boy and one high school boy. The fourth expert is an Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and is the main faculty advisor for this project. She has expertise in the area of school readiness experiences for low-income children and her race is Caucasian. All four experts provided feedback on the newly revised measure in preparation for the second phase of the study.

Phase II Parent Sample

For Phase II of this study, the questionnaire was piloted with 44 parent participants who were in the midst of the transition. Potential parent participants included those whose children were self-identified as Hispanic and also currently attending Kindergarten in one of the four targeted elementary schools. Survey packets were sent home with 126 eligible children across the four schools (16 attending Liberty Elementary, 28 attending Ramseur Elementary, 46 attending Randleman Elementary, and 36 attending Southmont Elementary).

Of the 126 parents recruited for participation in the second phase of the study, 45 completed and returned the survey for an overall response rate of 36%. For Liberty Elementary, 12 out of 16 parents (75%) completed the survey and comprise 27% of the overall sample. For Ramseur Elementary, 11 out of 28 parents (39%) completed the

survey and represent 24% of the study sample. Out of the 46 parents recruited at Randleman Elementary, only 10 parents (22%) completed the survey and represent 22% of the study sample. For Southmont Elementary, 12 out of 36 parents (33%) completed the survey and represent 27% of the study sample.

During data entry, I found that one parent reported her ethnicity as being Black/African American. This survey was excluded from further data analysis because the parent self-identified as Black/African American rather than Hispanic, and therefore did not meet the criteria or focus of the study. There may have been a data entry error in the schools system's database regarding the race of this student. Other demographic variables are discussed in the following section.

The sample for this pilot study phase was overwhelmingly female (98%) with 1 male respondent and 1 participant that did not report gender. The mean age for parents in this sample was 32-years-old, with a range from 18 to 46 years. In terms of home language use with their children, 18 parents in this sample reported that they spoke "mostly Spanish", 14 spoke "Spanish and a little English", 11 spoke "both Spanish and English equally", and 1 parent did not report this information. The majority of parents were born in Mexico (N=39, 91%) while 2 (5%) parents were born in the United States, 2 (5%) were born in other places, and 1 parent did not report this information. Eighty-one percent of the sample (N=35) were married or living with their partner, 7 were single, 1 was separated, and 1 did not report this information. The majority of parents in the sample did not attend school in the United States (72%). All reported that they were the primary caregiver (100%).

Other parent demographic information that was reported includes first child beginning kindergarten, first child attending school, highest grade completed, highest educational degree, annual family income, and if they family qualified for government programs. For 51% of the sample, this was parents' first child beginning kindergarten, and also for 51% of the sample, this was the first child attending school. Over half of the sample only finished school through middle school with 11 finishing elementary school, 16 finishing middle school, 10 finishing high school, 2 finishing their GED, 2 finishing 2-year college, 1 finishing 4-year college, 1 finishing post college, and 1 not reporting the highest grade completed. Similarly, most parents (N=25) had not completed any degree, 10 completed their high school diploma/GED, 1 completed a vocational degree, 1 completed a bachelor's degree, and 1 completed a Master's degree while 6 parents did not report this information. Of the 36 parents that completed their annual family income, 17 were receiving \$14,999 or less, 13 had family incomes in the range of \$15,000 to 24,999 and 6 parents had family incomes in the range of \$25,000 to \$34,999. For the variable of qualifying for government programs, 28 parents reported that they did qualify, 4 reported that they did not qualify, 9 parents did not know, and 3 did not report anything at all. Key demographics are reported in Table 1 below.

Phase I

Qualitative Measures

An interview protocol was created for use with Mexican immigrant parents that participated in interviews (See Appendix A). Parents were asked questions regarding

their background and family characteristics as well as their beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge regarding the American school system and the transition to school.

Table 1

Demographics of the FEIT-A Survey Participants

	N	%
<u>School</u>		
Liberty	12	27
Ramseur	10	23
Randleman	10	23
Southmont	12	27
<u>Where born</u>		
Mexico	39	91
United States	2	4.5
Other	2	4.5
<u>Marital Status</u>		
Married/living with partner	35	81
Separated	1	2
Single	7	16
<u>Highest Grade Completed</u>		
Elementary School	11	26
Middle school	16	37
High school	10	23
GED	2	5
2-year college or more	4	9
<u>Annual Income</u>		
\$14,999 or less	17	47
\$15,000 to \$24,999	13	36
\$25,000 to \$34,999	6	17

Creswell (2007) suggested that “questions are a narrowing of the central research question and subquestions of the research study” (p. 133). In order to develop the

interview protocol, the researcher first created a short introduction about the study's purpose and what she was asking parents to do. The researcher developed broader questions to place at the front end of the protocol in order to invite parents to open up and talk more generally about their experiences with their children's transition to kindergarten (Creswell, 2007). Broader questions included "Tell me about your child.", "What does your child like to do?", etc. Next, in order to transition parents' into thinking about their children's kindergarten transition, the researcher created a *Kindergarten Experiences* section with questions such as "How would you describe your child's kindergarten year?", "What did your child like most about kindergarten?", etc. The researcher then narrowed down to questions related to the critical dimensions of the transition process as well as questions about culture and race.

To assist in creating the interview protocol and to ensure that interviews captured information related to Research Question 2 (RQ2), the researcher reviewed the FEIT survey thoroughly for themes that needed to be further examined and included in the interview protocol. Three themes emerged from the review of the FEIT survey: parents' concerns, parents' needs, and opportunities for parents' involvement in their children's transition to school. These three themes became separate sections in the interview where questions were created. When reviewing the FEIT survey, the researcher noticed that many questions about concerns and needs were child-centered and did not fully encompass parents' concerns and needs. In order to explore how best to revise the FEIT to appropriately capture the experiences of Mexican immigrant parents, interview questions were created to encompass perspectives about the transition experiences of

both children and parents. For example, in the *Concerns About School* section, parents were asked to tell about their concerns about they had for their children when they started school as well as any concerns they had for themselves during the transition.

Additionally, in order to explore what aspects of the FEIT needed to be extended (RQ 2), the researcher developed questions related to culture, race, and parents' expectations of the transition to school. As this study is grounded in Critical Race Theory, it was crucial to advance the voices of these Mexican immigrant parents through questions designed to discover how their own cultural beliefs interacted with their experiences with their children's transition to kindergarten. Closing questions included broad questions such as goal and hopes parents had for their children as well as questions that gave parents the opportunity to add anything that they wanted to share but had not yet talked about during the interview. This would allow any new information regarding the transition to formal schooling to emerge from interview participants themselves.

Interview Data Collection Procedures

For the first phase, eight parents selected by Randolph County school staff, who agreed to participate and provided their contact information, were contacted via a phone call to set up an appointment for the interview. One of the participants who initially agreed to be contacted by the researcher was not able to be reached and therefore was not interviewed. During the initial phone call, parents were asked which language they prefer (Spanish or English) and interviews were subsequently conducted in their preferred language. Two participants chose to do the interview in English, while the other five participants chose to do the interview in Spanish. Interviews were held in-person at the

location and time of the participant's choice. All interviews were held in participants' homes. Interviews were conducted various days of the week including Saturday and at different times of the day (morning, afternoon, and evening) over the course of a month from the middle of July 2013 to the middle of August 2013. Interviews lasted from 45 to 90 minutes. Parents received \$20 for their participation in the interviews.

Expert Data Collection Procedures

For the expert review, experts were sent information via e-mail about the purpose of the study and what they were being asked to do (See Appendix B). Experts that agreed to participate were asked to read and sign a consent form and then were sent the adapted FEIT questionnaire for review and feedback. This feedback was used to revise the questionnaire further. This feedback (described further in the results section below) suggested that overall, experts had minor suggestions related mostly to the wording and language used in the survey. Other experts offered feedback that suggested that the FEIT-A, from their perspective, was well-aligned with the experiences of Mexican immigrant families.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Data analysis began with a transcription of all seven interviews. Five of the seven interviews were conducted in Spanish and so were transcribed from Spanish to English. Once interview transcriptions were completed, I shared them with my dissertation advisor for data analysis. To start, I read through each one in its entirety highlighting phrases or using in vivo codes that were repeated throughout the interview. By using in vivo codes, it was possible for themes to emerge regarding participants' experiences with their child's

transition to school (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Additionally, I used marginal remarks to assist in creating new themes or ideas about the critical dimensions of the transition process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Moreover, since this study aims to share the perspectives of Mexican immigrant parents, I analyzed interviews for key phrases that embodied these parents' stories so that their voices might be better understood.

Using in vivo codes and marginal marks, further analysis of the interviews was completed using a method as described by Moustakas (1994), which is a structured yet useful method of analysis (Creswell, 2007). The method of analysis included reviewing the transcriptions, in vivo codes, and marginal marks to develop a list of significant statements and then grouping those statements into larger units of information called meaning units or themes (Creswell, 2007). In order to triangulate the data, an Assistant Professor (the dissertation advisor) also reviewed and analyzed the transcriptions and developed meaning units or themes. These were found to be similar to the researcher's developed meaning units. In the end, nineteen meaning units were identified and organized into seven categories (See Appendix C). The seven categories included needs, concerns, involvement and advice to others, feeling welcome, communication, knowledge/information gathering, and cultural beliefs.

As part of the results section below, I used in vivo codes and marginal marks to compile a description of "what" and "how" each participant experienced during their children's transition to Kindergarten. Next, I began to develop a draft of a culturally relevant survey aimed at reflecting Mexican families' experiences during the transition to school. One existing survey, the Family Experiences and Involvement in Transition

(FEIT), was used as a resource in the creation of the new survey. The FEIT is a measure that has been used to study the experiences of families during the transition to school (McIntyre et al., 2007). The original FEIT demonstrated good reliability with its two scales of Family Concerns and Family Involvement ($\alpha = .79$ and $.78$ respectively). However, the FEIT has not been used with Mexican immigrant families nor has it been translated into Spanish, a language that many Mexican immigrant families are more comfortable with and can understand better.

Measurement Development Data Analysis

Along with a review of the FEIT, the current study used information from the qualitative interviews and a review of the literature to create a survey instrument that is culturally sensitive and relevant to the cultural values of Mexican immigrants. The draft of the survey was then shared with and was reviewed by four experts in the field. Once the experts reviewed the survey and gave their feedback, revisions to the survey were made. The survey entitled the adapted Family Experiences and Involvement in Transition (FEIT-A) was then submitted to IRB, approved, and was translated appropriately by a Mexican immigrant parent who works in the Randolph County school system, where survey participants were recruited. By utilizing this person to translate the document, the questionnaire uses language that is more appropriate to the Mexican immigrant parents in the county.

Phase II

Quantitative Measures

In the first phase of the current study, the *Family Experiences and Involvement in Transition – Revised* survey was created to better reflect the perspectives and cultural values of Mexican immigrant parents. The FEIT-A survey was then piloted in the second phase to provide initial information about its psychometric properties and administration issues. In general, the FEIT-A asked parents about their concerns, needs, experiences, and satisfaction related to the transition to Kindergarten. Additionally, the survey included demographic background information such as gender, age, ethnicity, birth country, marital status, income, home language use, child care setting before Kindergarten, and parents' level of education (see Appendix F).

Survey Recruitment and Data Collection Procedures

For the second phase of the project which was to pilot the survey, parents were recruited in the middle of September as parents need time to be able to process how the transition activities went during the beginning of school. Four critical pieces of information was collected from the four elementary school's data managers to inform the researcher which students' parents to recruit. Data managers at each elementary school provided the researcher with a printout of the names of all Kindergarten students, their ethnicity, their preferred home language, and their homeroom teacher. There were 126 parents in the four targeted elementary schools that were identified through the school system with having a Kindergarten child of Hispanic descent. All 126 parents were informed about the project with a packet of information sent home with their child at

school. Either Spanish language or English information packets were sent to parents, depending on their preferred home language. The packet of information contained a letter informing them of the study (Appendix D), a consent form (Appendix E), and the questionnaire (Appendix F). In the letter, parents were asked to send back the consent form and the completed questionnaire one week from receiving it and in a clearly marked brown manila envelope to their child's teacher if they chose to participate in the study.

In order to make the distribution of surveys as easy and efficient as possible for Kindergarten teachers, packets were clearly labeled with students' names, their classroom teacher, and their elementary school. A note to the teachers with a brief description of the study, the researcher's contact information, and completed surveys pick-up dates were taped to the front of an extra-large manila envelope (Figure 1). The note instructed teachers to put all completed surveys inside the extra-large manila envelope and to bring the envelope to the UNCG study box located in their school's front office at before the pick-up date. Teachers were also e-mailed by the researcher to remind them to place their extra-large manila envelopes with completed surveys into the UNCG study box by the pick-up date.

After one week, the researcher visited all schools and collected the completed surveys. She documented which surveys were returned and which surveys were still missing. At the first pick-up date, only 21 surveys had been completed and returned by the teachers. Some teachers did not turn in their manila envelope to the UNCG study box so it is unknown whether or not they had surveys at this first pick-up time. When the researcher visited another school for the first pick-up, there was a substitute receptionist

who did not know anything about the study and so the researcher had to return a few days later. One follow-up reminder letter (Appendix G) was sent home with children at school in their backpacks if the packet for those that had not completed the survey.

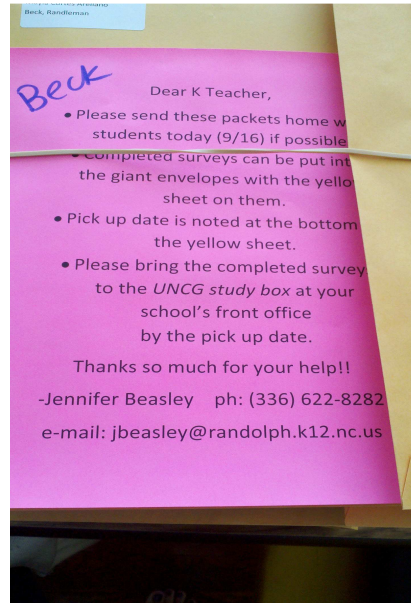


Figure 1. Example of Packet of Surveys Given to Kindergarten Teachers.

After one more week, the researcher e-mailed all teachers 1-2 days before she was going to do another pick-up of completed surveys. During the second round of pick-ups, 24 surveys were completed and picked up. One survey as described above, was excluded from data analysis due to the parent identifying as Black/African American.

To be more successful in achieving the project's specific aims, a point person employed by Randolph County Schools was assigned to assist with recruitment for the project (Fletcher & Hunter, 2003). This point person served as a liaison between school staff, parents, and the project staff and helped to check in with parents and answer

questions that parents had. Approximately 3 weeks after the initial distribution of the surveys, 3 point persons that had been assigned to each site (in 1 case, one point person was assigned to 2 sites) were notified of any outstanding surveys and the researcher asked the point persons to touch base with parents about the surveys. Point persons touched base with either a phone call or in some cases a text message to ask parents if they received the survey and if they had any questions about it. Some parents reported that they did not receive the survey through their child's teacher whereas other parents had questions about the process of the study including what to do. In my researcher memo notes, I noted feedback from point persons as well as conversations with teachers during the pick-up of surveys and findings from the memo notes are discussed later. The total amount of surveys completed was 45, which is a response rate of 36%. Only surveys that were returned that reported that parents were Mexican immigrants were included in the data analysis for the current study (N=44). Parents received \$5 for their participation in the second phase of the study, which was sent through their child's teacher in a sealed envelope along with a copy of the study's consent form.

Researcher Memo Procedures

Another data form, memo-ing, was used to enhance and expand on discovering new information during Phase II of the current study. The purpose of this type of data collection is "to document and rich the analytic process, to make implicit thoughts explicit, and to expand the data corpus" (Creswell, 2007). Researcher memo notes were made during the survey data collection phase as well as during data analysis. I took researcher memo notes after I visited any of the schools to drop off or pick up surveys,

any time I had contact with any of the K teachers involved in survey distribution, and any time that I had contact with any of the point people involved either via phone or in person. I also took researcher memo notes during survey data analysis often making notes about items missing during data entry or my interpretations of data analysis results. Surprisingly, research memo notes revealed rich, interesting, and useful data regarding survey data collection and data analysis of the FEIT-A.

Quantitative Data Analysis

To address Research Question 3 concerning the psychometric properties of the piloted FEIT-A, Phase 2 questionnaire data were examined using descriptive statistics, tests of internal consistency and a series of principal components analysis. Descriptive analyses included an examination of the mean, range, and distribution of each item. A coefficient alpha was calculated for each scale as well as an initial test of internal reliability or consistency where $\alpha = .7$ or higher was considered to indicate good internal consistency among a set of items. A series of principal components analyses using a direct oblimin solution was then chosen to test the construct validity of the FEIT-A in this pilot study. A Principal Component Analysis (PCA) using a direct oblimin solution was chosen in lieu of other types of factor analyses (i.e. principal axis factoring) because of its computational simplicity and because it uses all the variables when reducing the dimensionality of the data (Vyas & Kumaranayake, 2006). Then, independent sample t-tests were utilized to test the hypothesis for the fourth research question. Results from the quantitative phase were then summarized and interpreted next as part of the discussion.

Researcher Memo Data Analysis

As a part of the Phase II analysis, I gathered my researcher memo notes that were taken throughout the second phase of data collection. I reviewed each of researcher memo notes and began to use in vivo codes and marginal marks to further analyze my notes. Consequently, researcher memo data revealed important information regarding recruitment of parents and parents' challenges with the process of being involved in a research study and filling out surveys.

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings - Phase I

During the first phase of this study, 7 Mexican immigrant parents were interviewed so as to gain insight into their perceptions and experiences with their children's transition to Kindergarten that occurred one year prior. Consistent with Critical Race Theory, which aims to capture the perspectives of marginalized individuals such as Mexican immigrants, through the interview, parents were able to tell their story and share their unique experience related to their child's transition to kindergarten. Each parent was a little bit different in their backgrounds and beliefs, but they still shared a common experience with their children transitioning to Kindergarten. Descriptions of each parent participant and their individual stories are described below followed by a discussion of meaning units or themes that were created and then utilized to develop the FEIT-A.

Parents' Stories

Cynthia

Cynthia is a 27-year-old married mother of 2 children, a girl who just finished Kindergarten and one boy going into 7th grade. She arrived in the United States in 1991 in time to start Kindergarten and lived in the Asheboro area growing up. Her daughter attended day care starting at one week old at Teddy Bear Day Care in Asheboro, NC, but she only attended day care for a week before mom decided to keep her at home.

Important to Cynthia, her daughter attended JumpStart, a 1-week crash course to kindergarten prior to attending kindergarten. Her daughter attended Randleman Elementary for Kindergarten.

“Just let them go”. During the transition, Cynthia was able to empathize with her daughter’s experiences as she stated, “I knew what she was gonna go through cause I went through it.” It appeared that Cynthia really kept the focus on her daughter during the transition as well as during the interview despite being recently diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis of which she calmly remarked, “whatever happens, happens.” Cynthia described how she experienced some fear and sadness for herself during the transition but overall she emphasized empathetic feelings for her daughter. Before the transition to kindergarten, Cynthia had expectations for her daughter to learn and to stay in school. Again, Cynthia was aware of how her own experiences helped shape her expectations for her daughter. Cynthia’s expectations for her daughter likely stemmed from her own failure to finish school as well as her own desire to go back to school to get a GED. Cynthia shared her thoughts about the importance of parent participation in their children’s schooling and stated that “it makes the kids just move forward because [they think that their] parents went or did this with me.” Cynthia’s laid back perspective to “just let them go” to kindergarten without worrying too much may be based on her perspective that in the schools “right now, there’s a lot of help [for Hispanics].”

Maria

Maria is a married mother of 3 boys, one set of twins who just finished Kindergarten and one son going into 8th grade. She is 34-years-old and arrived in the US

in 1999. Her oldest son started kindergarten in 2001. Neither of the twins attended child care or Pre-K prior to attending Kindergarten. They stayed with mom right up until Kindergarten entry. Both mom and dad work full-time and mom works within close proximity to her sons' school. Her twin boys attended Southmont Elementary for Kindergarten.

“Live in the experience”. Maria made numerous remarks alluding to her anxiety before her sons' actually transitioned to kindergarten. Throughout the interview, she stated that she “was worried”, “had fear”, hope that kindergarten “wouldn't arrive”, that her sons “might have a bad experience”, and that her sons “would be scared”. Her concerns and fears that repeatedly came up demonstrated her anxiety for her sons about communication, using the bathroom, and social situations. She made statements such as “I had fear that they would not grasp the English language because we do not speak it here” and “I worried and was thinking that they would have accidents like not using the bathrooms and that they would wet themselves or that they would spill their milk. And they didn't meet a lot of people [prior] to school, [so] I thought they might be shy or cry”.

Interestingly, once Maria's sons started school, her anxiety seemed to cease. She told me that she had “more peace knowing people and the atmosphere was good”. She reported being comforted by the school having “someone in [the] window that understood Spanish”, which was referring to the presence of a Spanish speaker in the front office of the school. It also helped Maria's anxiety that her boys “adapted, continued, and liked it [in Kindergarten]”. Another support that helped Maria's anxiety to decrease as school started was “the very kind lady” who drove the bus. The bus driver, as

Maria put it, made them feel “safe”. Maria, at the time of the interview, reflected on the transition by saying “[I] am thankful with the people, the teacher...in all of the school that helped my sons in things that I couldn’t help them with”. She concluded that other parents should support their children during the transition to kindergarten by reminding them to “live in the experience, in the moment” because they it will pass so quickly.

Claudia

Claudia who is a mother of two girls, one who is going into 3rd grade and the other who just finished attending a self-contained Kindergarten but is being held back in Kindergarten. Claudia was born in 1986 and was 27-years-old at the time of the interview. She immigrated to the United States in 1995 and started 5th grade in the U.S. She repeated 5th grade and remained in the Asheboro City school system going to Loflin, Balfour, South Asheboro Middle School, and went to Lindley Park for summer school. She stopped attending school in the 9th grade although she is currently enrolled at Randolph Community Classes taking GED courses and works at Bosson during the day. Her mother lives with her and the girls and her dad (separated from her mom) and the girls’ dad helps with child care during the summer. Her daughter attended Randleman Elementary for Kindergarten and attended an NC Pre-K program at another nearby elementary school.

“Not as bad as I thought”. Before the transition to kindergarten, Claudia’s “only concern was that she does good on her speech”. Since Claudia’s daughter had started receiving speech therapy around her 3-year-old birthday, mom’s concerns centered on her doing well with her speech and that she was learning. She wanted her daughter to do well

with speech and make progress for goals that appear to be centered on social-emotional well-being. For example, Claudia commented that progress would enable her daughter to feel “more comfortable about her self being around kids and [that] she’s able to talk to them”. This desire for her daughter to be able to talk to other kids stemmed from the fact that kids “would make fun of her because she didn’t talk. They would call her baby or [say] are you just a baby”. Claudia’s desire for her daughter to do well with her speech was reflected in the following comment: “I just wanna see her at that level that she needs to...cause she feels left out sometimes [and]...I feel sad so I just want her to be on that level”. Like most mothers, Claudia wants progress for her daughter to be socially accepted in life.

Shockingly, Claudia found herself and her daughter in an interesting situation on the first day of school because as she reported, “when I took her on her first day of school I was like is this it? I mean [is] the class is bigger...I mean only 4 students, wow”. It seemed that Claudia had not been prepared for this self-contained setting prior to the transition but she took it in stride. Claudia told me that at first she hoped “this doesn’t you know like mess us up with [daughter’s name] and her speech”. Upon reflecting on the experience, Claudia justified the situation as she commented that “when I saw her that she was doing good, she was coloring and she was able to tell me the colors and the numbers. I thought maybe it ain’t bad...not as bad as I thought”. Claudia reported that her daughter’s dad was unhappy with her having to repeat kindergarten, but Claudia seemed to try and focus on the positive of how far her daughter had come because “she was able to talk to [her] more, communicate with little kids”.

Throughout the interview, Claudia repeatedly made comments about her desire for her daughter to have progress and that “she was gonna be at that level that she was supposed to” during the year. Claudia then stated at various times in the interview that in fact she “saw a lot of progress”, “made a big progress in Kindergarten”, and that “she did make a lot of progress”. Interestingly, despite Claudia’s numerous remarks about her daughter’s progress, she reported that her daughter was going to repeat kindergarten and that in retrospect “maybe it would’ve helped a lot if she was with a bigger class”. After the initial “shock” of her daughter being in a self-contained classroom, Claudia credits the school and said, “she’s been doing really good and since she started school it’s been helping her a lot”.

Magdalena

Magdalena, is a 43-year-old mother of one boy. She arrived in the United States about 10 years ago and did not attend school here. Her son stayed at home with mom until he attended a public school Pre-K program. She is married to an American man. Her only son attended Liberty Elementary for Kindergarten.

“It is very beautiful work”. Magdalena’s perspective was such that she viewed the transition to Kindergarten as a joint learning process for both her and her son, which is reflected by the following comments “It was good because I learned with him” and “I would like to understand”. She alluded to an openness in learning more about how to help her son with the transition and during the year by stating that “[as mothers], we have a lot of necessity but we don’t know what to do”. Her own personal learning during the transition was achieved through her own initiation as she commented that “first I got to

know the classroom. This is necessity to get to know it. And then [get to know] all of the school”. Her perspective about the joint learning process of the transition to kindergarten also spilled over to her perspective about her interactions with her son as she commented that “every idea that he has, I never tell him no. With whatever idea he has, I have to help him”.

Magdalena’s concerns for her son as he transitioned to kindergarten were taken in stride and as she reflected on retrospectively, she remarked that “I had some [concerns] that passed but I believe that [the transition] was good”. She helped her son cope with his concerns for example when “he was nervous...and [he] said...I don’t think this is good...there are not a lot of bathrooms”, Magdalena told him “don’t worry when you raise your hand to go to the bathroom, they’re going to give you the opportunity, it is the same as in Pre-K”. Similarly, she realized that her own concerns were something that, too, would pass as she said that the school supported parents, especially “us, Latinas, [who] have a fear of speaking”. Both the school and teachers seemed to be helpful with her positive feelings about the transition as she remarked that she appreciated “the kindness [of the teachers], and me as a mother, saw the kids being treated to see if they were ok”.

Like many of the other mothers, Magdalena “hoped for an advance” with her son during the kindergarten year. Despite initially having feelings that were “complicated that he wasn’t going to grow”, Magdalena soon realized that “it was a mistake. [Her son] is very intelligent”. Perhaps Magdalena’s openness and flexibility about the transition to kindergarten allowed the transition experience to be positive for her and her son as she

was “thankful and applaud[ed]” the teachers’ work and “it is very beautiful work”, she concluded.

Olivia

Olivia who is a 29-year-old mother of 3 children. Her oldest daughter is entering the 7th grade and her son will be entering the 2nd grade while her youngest daughter is entering 1st grade. Her husband has recently been imprisoned and she lives by herself with the three children. She arrived in the United States in 7th grade and began working in a factory to help out her family. She currently works in the same factory. Her daughter attended a child care center called Kids-R-Us for 1 year prior to attending Liberty Elementary for Kindergarten.

“If one doesn’t suffer, you don’t know what to value”. Olivia’s experiences with the transition were a reflection of her daughter’s easy going personality and her daughter’s positive experiences during the transition. Numerous comments from Olivia suggested that when children do well and have an easy transition, parents do not have a lot of worries or concerns about the transition. Olivia reported that for her daughter “everything was easy for her”, “there is nothing that she didn’t like”, and that “she learned so quickly”. Olivia commented that she felt “comfortable” with the transition and during the kindergarten year because conferences with her daughter’s teacher squashed any concerns she might have had when “the teacher said ‘[daughter’s name] is very ahead in this and this’”. Although Olivia had some feelings of fear and anxiety before her daughter started kindergarten because “you don’t know how the child is going to react”, her fear quickly faded as Olivia saw her daughter “as very enthusiastic, happy”. In return,

Olivia “was very much happy” as she looked at her child’s reactions to lead her own feelings.

Along with looking at her daughter’s reactions to the transition, Olivia’s difficult upbringing and experiences with severely impoverished Mexican schools likely prompted her to have an extremely positive attitude about the transition to school. Olivia commented that the schools that she attended in Mexico were “very different. There are no bathrooms. There is not water...it’s so poor that if there isn’t [money], you don’t eat in all of the school day until you are at home”. She continued on that she remembers “walking to the mountain with your bag. It’s a plastic bag. There is nothing like a backpack that they give you here. It is sad”. Her reflection on the poverty she lived in was compared to her feelings and thoughts when she first moved to the United States during the interview. The differences were evident, she remarked, because when “she arrived here, [she] saw [her] mom’s apartment and wanted to say – a palace! Ant it was a really small apartment but how I had ever wished for a seat to sit in, even for a carpet, so for me it was marvelous, a different world”. Olivia eloquently put it that “if one doesn’t suffer, you don’t know what to value”. In conclusion, Olivia’s carefully reflective perspective on the transition to kindergarten was due in part to her daughter’s easy transition as well as her reflection on what life could be based on the poverty that she once knew.

Paula

Paula is a 40-year-old married mother of two girls. Her oldest daughter is going into 1st grade and her youngest daughter is 4-years-old and going into Pre-K this year.

She currently does not work and stopped working when she had her first daughter. She came to the United States 13 years ago and reunited with her husband who had come to here before her. Her daughter attended Ramseur Elementary for Kindergarten.

“Not only is it the job of the teachers, it is the job of the parents”. Similar to Olivia, Paula really took cues from her daughter during the transition to kindergarten stating that “she like everything” and that “she was always happy everyday” which seemed to make the transition smoother. The school itself also seemed to help the transition be easier as Paula reported that she liked “the way in which they [the school] welcomed her”. This welcoming of her daughter seemed to transfer to Paula feeling welcomed by the school and thus making the transition to kindergarten that much easier. The school also seemed responsive to their needs as a family as one thing that came up was the communication barrier between Paula and the school. However, when asked about this in more detail, Paula reported that “we asked them for an interpreter and they gave us one in the school [and] also by telephone there was always someone there that understood Spanish too”. She compared her daughter’s school to her niece’s school saying that “the school where she is, there are a lot of people that speak Spanish...and this is the reason we haven’t had any problems”.

Paula also seemed to feel at ease and comfortable with her daughter’s transition to kindergarten as shown by her comments stating that she did not feel “sadness...I was very happy that she started school because I [knew] this was going to help her a lot”. Her relaxed attitude about the transition may stem from the knowledge that she had regarding preparation for the transition. As parents, she remarked, “the more information we have,

the more we will have” and she seemed to have the information necessary to prepare her child for kindergarten as well as to transition her to school. For example, she told me that “you have to teach them that before they go to school, you have to teach them all of this. Like to go to the bathroom”. Paula continued on saying that it was important to teach children “to begin, like that they sleep early, we are going to brush our teeth, wash our hands, like go to the bathroom and all of these things will help and from before school starts, support the school with these activities we can do in the house”. Paula’s knowledge of how to prepare her daughter came from sources such as her own family back in Mexico as she has “sisters that are teachers...in Mexico and they helped”. Paula remarked that I learned from [them] when I was young. When I was studying, they would bring their work to the house and I would help them” and so this was a good resource for Paula to learn her types of things to do with her daughter to prepare her for school. Paula also took cues from her daughter’s former speech therapists or “maestras” as she called them. She commented that they “drove me to work with her I believe to do more with her education”.

Remarkably, Paula took as much if not more responsibility than the teachers in preparing her daughter for school success. During the interview, she shared with me her beliefs about parent involvement stating that it was the parents’ role “to cooperate” and that “if one supports everything, the kids are going to be better off in school”. Affirming her belief in strong parental involvement was her statement that it is important for parents to cooperate “in the house like in school to help them and support all they do. Not only is it the job of the teachers, it is the job of the parents”.

Lia

Lia is a married mother of 4 children. Three of those children are already married and did attend school in the United States but not until high school. Her youngest child, her daughter, was born here and is about to start first grade. She came to the United States 10 years ago and currently does not work but does care of her two grandchildren during the day. Her daughter participated in a Parents as Teachers home visitation program for two years before attending Kindergarten at Ramseur Elementary.

“The privilege of being born here”. Lia described how her initial thoughts about the transition left her feeling “very desperate” and that she really worried about the unknown. She wondered “if the teacher was going to treat her [daughter] well. If another kid was going to hit her...If she was going to eat or not eat”. Lia worried about many aspects of the transition including things like “was she going to cry”, “because she didn’t know English, she was not going to be able to ask for permission to go to the bathroom”, and she “worried about the food...what are they going to give her? Maybe she’s not going to like it”. Interestingly, it did not seem that Lia had gained any understanding of the American school system when she transitioned her older children to high school years ago. It almost felt as if Lia’s despair was heightened because this was her last child transitioning to school.

Along with Lia’s concerns for her daughter, Lia described her concerns for herself as a parent during the transition to kindergarten. She worried about things like checking her child out of school with the front office computer and stated, “I was shy at first because everything was difficult and we didn’t know anyone or anything and I, what I

thought was about computers and I don't know how to use computers". Moreover, unlike the other parents interviewed, Lia seemed to be anxious about being alone as she commented that "I thought, I am going to stay by myself, stay by myself. I won't have anyone to talk to...with who am I going to talk to?" Lia alluded to the idea that her daughter is so central to her life that when she went to school Lia would "make the food that she likes...[and] when she is going to come home, [Lia would] be standing here waiting for her". Perhaps feeding off of her mother's anxiety, Lia's daughter also struggled with the transition because "she didn't want to go because the first few days she was so enthusiastic because she thought she was only going to go for a little while, or for a few days...and after that she said, Oh, I don't want to go to school".

The idea that Lia's daughter was such a central part of her life was magnified with the following statement: "that I would support my child always. That I would be with her *always*, supporting her". Perhaps this intense focus on her last child to transition to school caused Lia to experience a lot of stress and despair about the transition. However, with some support from the Parents as Teachers parent educator, Lia's perspective about the transition to school changed from one of despair to one where she "adapted". Lia spoke of how she learned that she "had to leave her because she had to study. She had to study...she had to learn and better oneself for tomorrow". Lia's anxiety about the transition seemed to be overshadowed with her overwhelming desire for her daughter to "advance" and "make gains". During the interview, she told me that she gives her daughter the following message: "I tell her to study and that you have the privilege of

being born here, right, the privilege of being born here...” so it seems that despite her desperate feelings at the beginning, she “felt a little, a little more calm”.

Group Themes (RQ1)

In order to answer the first research question, which was to explore the critical dimensions of the transition process as reported by Mexican immigrant parents, the researcher did a complete analysis of the interview data. Across the stories of these Mexican immigrant parents, several meaning units or themes emerged that reflect the voices of this marginalized group and that comprise the critical dimensions of the transition process. As Critical Race Theory advocates for movements for social justice, the themes that emerged from this group of parents was used to develop a culturally relevant measure of parents’ experiences and involvement with their children’s transition to school. With the development of this measure, I hope to continue a commitment to social justice with the future distribution and use of this measure. The more Mexican immigrant parents that complete the measure and the more that data from this measure is shared with schools, the longer the commitment to social justice continues. Since school transition practices seem to be based on White, Middle Class values are therefore inherently embedded with racism, the hope is that this measure will contribute to continue to advance the voice of the marginalized until the structures of racism can be changed.

There were nineteen group themes that emerged from the stories of participants. These nineteen themes helped to influence the development of the culturally relevant measure that was piloted in the second phase of this study. The themes were coded into

seven meaningful categories that represent the critical dimensions of the transition process, including needs, concerns, involvement and advice to others, feeling welcome, communication, knowledge/information gathering, and cultural beliefs. These distinct categories suggest that: 1) parents had desires and needs for both their children and themselves regarding the transition; 2) parents had concerns that were related to basic needs such as food, using the bathroom, and transportation to school; 3) parents had strong beliefs about the importance of their involvement (the home-school partnership); 4) parents felt that it was important that school staff in general were welcoming and friendly; 5) parents felt that being able to communicate easily and in their home language with school staff eased the transition; 6) parents used who was available to them as resources for information pertaining to the transition, and 7) despite there being many cultural and structural differences between the schools in the United States and Mexico, parents did not dwell on these differences. These seven categories and the themes that fall under each of them are described in more detail below.

Needs

Throughout the interviews, Mexican immigrant parents discussed their needs and desires during the transition to kindergarten. There were three themes that emerged in this category that included: 1) what parents want from the school for their children; 2) what parents want from the school for themselves as parents; and 3) knowing people such as teachers and classmates prior to entry is helpful.

“Give [them] the tools for [their] learning”. Parents overwhelmingly suggested that the main thing that they need from the schools for their children was for their

children “to learn, to learn”. Learning was measured through their children advancing as parents discussed the need for their children to “advance more” and to “make gains”. Thus, one role of the schools, according to parents in this study, is to “pay [the kids] a little more attention. More attention than they would put on [them normally] so that [they] would have more learning” (Lia). Advancing and making gains would not be possible without the meeting the basic needs of the children as Olivia put it, “I think the most important thing is learning and the safety of [children] because this is the biggest concern of one as a parent”.

Interestingly, learning to these parents was conceptualized in several different ways rather than focused on just one area of development such as academics or learning to read. Aside from stating that schools “give them more knowledge”, Maria commented that it was important for schools to “treat them well” and to “give them confidence”. Similarly, Paula discussed her need for the schools to assist with the social development of her child. She stated, “Kindergarten is to teach them the rules” as well as “to give [them] the tools for [their learning because I think that kids themselves will be learning. If the school gives them the tools, well they are going to learn with a better way”. Paula’s perspective suggests that without social development, kids will not be successful and that a role of the schools is to support children in their social development.

“The more information we have, the more we will help”. Parents also suggested that they had specific needs and desires from the school for themselves and for parents in general. Undoubtedly, information from the school on how to help their children was their number one priority. Maria discussed the need for information to help

parents because “they also want to see at the same time more [on] how to do projects, ideas, different things”. Paula emphasized how important information was especially with Mexican immigrant parents by stating “It’s because at times, one is prepared to help out but they don’t have the best information to do this and to inform us of what we need to do, here we are, all the parents, prepared to help do it”. These statements demonstrate that Mexican immigrants, who have different backgrounds and may not be familiar with the American school system, may have even less knowledge on how to help support their children. Although the desire is there, Mexican immigrant parents need and desire information.

Others commented that the best way to get out information to parents was through good communication. Two examples of the desire for good communication are demonstrated by the following statement: “they [need to] have a lot of communication with parents.....one wants to know more and they don’t have it” (Maria). Paula summed it up by saying that “the only thing, for everyone and it’s not just for me, but the communication with the teachers. In many schools they have what they give us and they have the communication. And this I believe is normal and important to know how the kids are”. Thus, information with good communication from the school is both crucial and desired, as these parents suggested, in supporting their children’s schooling.

“More peace knowing people”. Parents during the interviews revealed a desire for their children to know the teachers and classmates prior to school entry. They stated that not knowing the “faces” of their classmates and starting school with “a lot o kids they didn’t know, people that they didn’t know” (Maria) actually caused some fear and

anxiety in their children. In some cases, not knowing the faces of their teachers caused children to have intense emotional reactions to school. Claudia remembered how her daughter “was really excited that she was riding the bus so we didn’t have no problem about the bust just that she didn’t know the teachers and she [would] always make herself throw up every morning”.

Magdalena discussed how her son “thought he would be with the same faces that he knew [in Pre-k]” and although she discussed how he was sad at first, she reported that “it passed and he went to school and he got accustomed to other kids”. Perhaps this is an area that schools could work on based on the suggestions by parents in this study that they desire their children to know the faces of their teachers and classmates prior to school entry. Parents even suggested ways to help transition their children in this aspect such as Olivia who suggested that schools should do “a meeting where they can get to know all the kids that are going to be in the classroom, that they get to know and they participate and on that first day of class, that have, that they know each other that they have exchanged words and know each other and will have more confidence.” Aside from getting to know teachers and classmates before the transition to school, Maria recommended that children also are able to participate in “attending classes during the summer time...because they have fear of going to school beforehand and the summer classes motivate them to see different things, things they don’t have in the house, or things they don’t know”. With some of these suggested transition activities in place, children may get to know the faces of their teachers and classmates, which may decrease their fear and anxiety, and will have “more peace knowing people” (Maria).

Concerns

Parents concerns were brought up throughout each and every interview. There were 4 themes that emerged that are related to parents' concerns about the transition to kindergarten. Concerns that emerged from the interviews were related to: 1) food, 2) bathrooms, 3) the bus, and 4) concerns specific to parents. The first two themes that emerged are related to children's basic needs and will be discussed together.

“What are they going to give her?”. Parents repeatedly discussed their worries and concerns with their children and food as well as using the bathroom. Maria worried that her son “wouldn’t like the food”. Lia also focused on food and said that she worried and “thought about the food [and] if she was going to eat or not”. She continued on saying that “I worried about the food, always about the food because she doesn’t eat that much. I was concerned with the food because here in the house I have to give her what she wants. And I said, what are they going to give her? Maybe she’s not going to like it”. Since nourishment is a basic need, it is understandable that these parents were concerned about their children eating. It was less about the schools lacking food, but more about whether or not their children would actually like and eat the food. Culture inevitably plays a role in this concern as these Mexican immigrant parents may have been worried about their children eating food that was presumably very different from the food they served their children in their own homes.

“I told her, don’t go, don’t go and just sit there”. Parents were worried about different aspects of their children using the bathroom at school. They were not worried about their children having accidents as much as they were about the location of the

bathrooms as suggested by this statement, “my concern was that they would have to leave the classroom to use the bathroom outside the classroom. What would they miss in the classroom, would another teacher grab them...and things like this” (Maria). Magdalena’s concerns were mirrored by her child’s concern as she told me that “he was nervous because he said, I don’t think this is good, there are not a lot of bathrooms”. Parents concerns with using the bathroom can be linked to their unfamiliarity with the school and the kindergarten classrooms. One way that schools might be able to support parents with this area of concern is by letting them visit the classroom and school and going over the kindergarten routines in as much detail as possible including when children can use the bathroom.

Additionally, parents also had concerns about their children communicating to go to the bathroom. Lia explained how because her daughter “didn’t know English [that] she was not going to be able to ask for permission to go to the bathroom”. This worried Lia so much that she actually offered advice to her daughter and explained to me “I told her, don’t go, don’t go and just sit there”. Without having talked to these parents, information such as concerns about food and using the bathroom would remain unknown. These concerns emerged and were included in the development of the FEIT-A as this study aimed to understand Mexican immigrant parents’ experiences and concerns with their children’s transition to school.

Involvement

In general, parents understood that they had to take responsibility in educating and supporting their children, especially in the home environment. They seemed to

believe strongly in their role in helping their children with the transition and their ideas about involvement fell into three themes: 1) the importance of adjusting to a routine, 2) working together with the school, and 3) appreciating and participating in the school to home activities.

“Mami, it’s time for school”. During interviews, parent repeatedly brought up their perspective that routines were important in ensuring their children had a smooth transition to school. Some parents, like Maria, talked about the struggle to get her children in a routine saying “that they don’t want to sleep early. It takes a lot to wake them up also”. Maria discussed how this was a one concern she had, which magnified her desire to get them into a routine to make the transition easier. Paula discussed parents in Maria’s situation describing that “I heard about other people that, really suffered/had a hard time getting their children up because at times they would cry and didn’t want to go to school”. Fortunately, both Paula and Claudia felt that they were lucky that there kids did already have a routine and both credited the routine at least in part of helping their children transition easier to kindergarten. Claudia discussed how “as soon as [I] would tell her it was time for school, she would get up. I mean she didn’t even have trouble with her trying to get her up for school ready or [I] will only say the bus is gonna leave you and she would jump out of bed and run to the bathroom you know and get dressed and everything” when she would tell her “mami, it’s time for school”. Paula also seemed happy that her daughter “would get up and help me get her dressed and she would say bye and go on the bus and be so happy”. Not only was the routine important for children,

but it seemed to also be important for parents as well. If their children had a routine that they engaged in, parents seemed less likely to be anxious about the transition.

To reiterate how important they believed the routine was in easing the transition, parents even offered advice to other parents of children starting kindergarten. Paula suggested that “to begin, to begin, like that they sleep early, (laughter), we are going to brush our teeth, wash our hands, like go to the bathroom and all of these things will help and from before school starts, support the school with these activities we can do in the house”. Parents would not have suggested a transition practice such as this routine, if they did not strongly believe that it helped and worked.

“Take our part in helping”. Aside from setting up a routine at home, parents’ interview revealed information that suggested they believed in working together with the school for the benefit of their children. Paula revealed her own perspective on involvement by stating that “if one supports everything, the kids are going to be better off in school”. Maria also communicated this belief with the following: “Well, I think that one has to be involved. One should have participation in whatever activity there is in the school. And one wants to have more time, many times, so they can attend, cooperate, help, and see in what ways they can be involved with their kids at school”. Parental involvement and participation as demonstrated by Paula’s and Maria’s statements are multi-dimensional and includes attending cooperating, helping, and even exploring ways to be involved.

Maria did comment that although parents really wanted to participate and be involved, at times it is challenging because “the reality is that many times, there is not

time the morning so they can go [and participate]”. Claudia spoke about how in her busy schedule, she knew the time constraints but also knew that “she’s gonna do better even if you just sit with her 10 minutes and just play with her. Those 10 minutes are gonna be really helpful”.

Some felt so strongly in parental involvement and participation that they talked about how “it is our responsibility more than the teacher” (Olivia). Lia even had plans to involve her daughter in summer work and remarked that “I have to do it so she doesn’t forget it and so she learns how to write it, to write it and read it”. Despite having busy lives, these parents believed in the power of their involvement and realize that they should “just try to do what we can and they [teachers] were going to work with [them] in school” (Claudia) and that they needed to “take our part in helping as parents” (Olivia).

“We read, we helped her, and we signed too”. Parents realized that their involvement did not end when their children transitioned to kindergarten. Many parents commented that they appreciated the activities that were sent from school to home and this encouraged them to continue to be positively involved in their children’s transition to kindergarten. Activities such as books, reading logs, “flashcards”, daily “folders”, and notes were mentioned by parents during interviews. Parents felt like the activities sent home were a way to keep them connected to their children’s education as Paula revealed “it is a lot of help that they send the folder and daily we see the colors that they did and there is one [other]...it always says in a little note, how much time they have spent with the kids”.

Parents connected these school to home activities to their children's progress as Lia stated "I believe she advanced a lot [because of these]". For some, it almost seemed as if these school to home activities empowered them to want to participate more. The activities, one parent suggested, 'had a good strategy for reading' (Paula) and parents seemed to learn how to better help their children through these activities. In general, parents spoke fondly of the "homework" sent home by the teachers at school.

Feeling Welcome

One aspect of this study was to really try and understand the experiences of Mexican immigrant parents during their children's transition to kindergarten. Often, schools are the first societal institution that Mexican immigrants come into contact with so whether or not they feel welcome is an important category that emerged from the interview data. There were two themes in this feeling welcome category are 1) the importance of the first contact being kind and 2) characteristics of teachers and school staff that are important.

"This helped me a lot, the first lady in the bus". Parents emphasized the importance of having their first contacts with school personnel as setting the tone for their not only their children's transition to kindergarten but also their own transition. Maria talked at length about how her sons' bus driver who was "a very kind lady" really helped ease the transition. She reflected on how her sons "went up on the bus and greeted her and hugged her. [And how] she helped us a lot. We felt safe... [with] the first lady in the bus". Claudia also reiterated the importance of having first contacts with the school as setting the tone for their transition experiences. Claudia appreciated their kindness as she

stated “they would always tell you, what time were you able to and they would try to work with you and I mean, they were all real nice.” Both kindness and consistency with kind staff were important because if the kind staff members were not there, parents said it changed how their children experienced the transition. Evidence of this was when Maria’s sons’ bus driver no longer drove their bus. She told me that “they were sad because [of] the following person that arrived, they wanted her to treat them the same and she didn’t treat them the same. So all of the days of the week they asked for the [first] lady”. These parents talked about staff that were kind to them although they did not mention specific names so it seemed more about the treatment of their children during the transition rather than getting to know the individuals.

“All the people and the teachers were very kind”. The characteristics of teachers and school staff were also reported as being extremely important in helping ease the transition. Parents spoke of how “all the people and the teachers were very kind” (Maria). Perhaps having a friendly, kind face during a time of uncertainty was what parents really desired. Magdalena, much like Maria, spoke of the kindness of the teachers and how she “as a mother, saw the kids being treated to see if they were ok”.

Other teacher characteristics that were mentioned as being important in parents’ satisfaction with the transition to kindergarten included “good coordination between the teachers” (Magdalena), following a certain code of conduct to treat all children equally, and making efforts to get to know each student’s personality. Specific to marginalized individuals, it is important that “there are some rules that they [teachers] treat all different colors the same”, Magdalena advocated. She felt that teachers did follow a certain code

of conduct that enabled them to eliminate racism in their practices, “but between, outside the school personnel, perhaps, it is different”. Teachers that recognized that all students had needs and that did not discriminate against minority children were thought of highly. Additionally, teachers that recognized students’ individual needs had characteristics that were also thought of highly. Paula’s daughter “was not the first to say, for example, I, I will participate” but it took an involved teacher so that “she would participate but only when the teacher would tell her ‘come, [child’s name]’”. Kindness, among other teacher characteristics, helped parents to see that teachers did care about their children and thus made the transition to kindergarten a little bit easier.

Communication is Key

All of the parents being interviewed spoke Spanish as their first language. The majority of the parents being interviewed spoke Spanish entirely while two of the parents being interviewed spoke both Spanish and English. Since the language of most American schools is English, communication was central to parents’ experiences during their children’s transition. In particular, the two themes that emerged relating to communication included 1) the availability of Spanish speakers in schools and 2) communication and being listened to translates to a calm transition.

“Now it is easier”. Parents reported that being able to communicate in their home language really assisted them with their children’s transition. Maria was able to compare her sons’ schools in the present compared to her oldest sons’ school experiences and commented that “now it is easier. Now in the school there are people that speak Spanish and with him there was no one....so if you didn’t speak a little English there was no one

to support you”. Other parents agreed with her as evidence by the following comments: “before he entered school I went to the office and questioned if there was anyone that spoke Spanish and yes, there was the secretary who spoke Spanish and this was the first think I thought this is not complicated” (Magdalena) and “here at least someone speaks Spanish” (Olivia). For the most part, parents also voiced their satisfaction with having someone that spoke their language readily available for them. For example, Paula stated that “but we asked them for an interpreter and they gave us one in the school. Also by telephone there was always someone there that understood Spanish too”. Maria also agreed that interpreters were available by phone as she commented, “I called and in the window they have someone that understands Spanish”.

Although there was an availability of at least one interpreter, some schools had more than one even though one was not as friendly. She discussed how one interpreter “really serves [helps you out] well and the other has a face like [a grump]” and “she has a different way, she is not friendly”. As Lia reminded us, sometimes it is not just about having an interpreter available, but it is also about how the interpreter respects and treats them.

Knowledge and Information Gathering

During the interviews, parents reported that they sought out information regarding the transition to kindergarten from different sources. In addition, they discussed the current knowledge they possessed and who had helped them gain that knowledge. Specifically, parents’ discussed their personal knowledge of language development and how they believed their children were influenced by learning Spanish and English.

Parents' knowledge and information gathering fell into the two themes of 1) knowledge of Spanish and English (bilingual language development) and 2) using who is available as resources for information about school.

“Gave us advice that they should not lose Spanish”. A few parents commented that based on their personal knowledge, they believed that they were confusing their kids with talking to them in Spanish and the school teaching them English. Claudia, seemed particularly concerned about this, as she said, “I think it’s hard because we talk Spanish here and then she hears English so I mean that’s making it a little bit harder so I bet she’s like which language am I supposed to talk. Which one do I learn?” Magdalena seemed to share this same type of knowledge about bilingual language development and discussed how “at times he confuses things because he says some words in Spanish and it is good in Spanish but I need him to read the books from the school”. Parents seemed conflicted about and a little unsure about their knowledge on bilingual language development and took advice from teachers who as Maria put it, “gave us the advice that they should not lose Spanish, that if the English language and all that for example they would learn all of this in the school”.

“I didn’t know anything about this and [she] helped me in everything and we were ready”. Parents mentioned utilizing whoever was available in their lives as a resource for supporting them and their children during the transition to kindergarten. Paula was fortunate enough to have “sisters that are teachers” while others used “cousins that went to this school” as resources for their family. Other parents had either therapists or parent educators that supported them and gave them knowledge what to expect during

the transition to kindergarten. Paula, for example, spoke highly of “all the teachers she had before Kindergarten with her therapy were very good teachers” who seemed to serve as resources for Paula and her family. Claudia reflected on a therapist’s support as well, but it was a therapist that had worked with her older daughter in the past. Claudia discussed how some of her knowledge came because of one particular speech therapist. She commented, “I remember the stuff Heather did with [my daughter] so I’m like, I told my mom, I’m gonna do some of the things when Heather worked with [my daughter] with so I started reading, I remember Heather reading [my daughter] books and let her hold the books and the hard books”.

Similarly, Lia spoke fondly of how much knowledge and support she received from Amanda, her parent educator. Lia told me how she felt comfortable asking Amanda questions like “how will the classrooms be or how, they’re not going to lose by child when she starts school or how is the lunch and all of this”. Parents’ ability to have a discussion and conversation about their questions and about the transition process seemed to really have helped parents gain knowledge. Some resources like Lia’s parent educator went above and beyond to support these parents from a different cultural background to transition smoothly and without fear. For example, one parent commented that her resource “brought me a photograph, the photograph showed where [my daughter] was going to go and everything...and so with that, I went, they brought me to pick up my daughter in school and I saw where she was going to be, where it was and Amanda told me it’s going to be here, it’s over here and so I felt a little, a little more calm”.

Some parents even had individuals that they were not directly involved with that helped their children prepare for school, which in turn eased the transition. For example, Maria discussed the daughter of the woman who care for her sons and stated, “I was surprised... this girl, well girl, she was 18, taught him how to write his name and he learned it. She helped a lot. With the kids that stayed there, she taught them to color, to write”. It seemed that parents really gravitated towards whomever they had access to as a resource. Whether it was a therapist or parent educator that came into their homes or an 18-year-old daughter of a child care provider, parents took in information from all these resources and transformed it into knowledge about the transition to kindergarten.

Cultural Differences

Every parent that was interviewed was had emigrated from Mexico at some point in their lives. Because of this shared experience of immigration, during interviews, parents were asked to reflect on and discuss on cultural differences between their experience with the schools in Mexico and their experiences with the schools in the United States. Overall, parents talked about the drastic differences between their school experiences in Mexico versus the United States, but did not dwell on these past experiences. Instead, they seemed grateful that their children have the opportunity to attend schools in the United States and had goals related to being successful in education. They also put a lot less stress on themselves during the transition to kindergarten and really viewed kindergarten as an event that has to happen. Three themes related to cultural differences emerged and include 1) differences between their experiences with

schools in Mexico and their experiences in the United States; 2) goals for their children in the future; and 3) kindergarten as an event that has to happen.

“No...no, I don’t want to think about this”. Parents discussed the many differences that they perceived between what the schools in Mexico have to offer in comparison to what the schools here have to offer. Several parents mentioned the food given to children at schools as being a major difference. For example, Maria told me that “here they give food, there no” while Olivia mentioned that “here they give them lunch, there at times if the mother has money, she’ll give you some and if she gives you money you buy something [for lunch]”. It seems that parents did notice the differences in whether or not children at school get breakfast and lunch, yet they seemed to appreciate it and Olivia reminded me that you “have to value what [you] have”. Additionally, Claudia seemed to appreciate not only that the schools provided lunch, but the quality of the food. She commented, “they [in Mexico] don’t care if you are not eating healthy or not...not like here. They make sure you have your milk and vegetable and fruit”.

Other parents discussed the lack of materials or school supplies in Mexico and Magdalena commented “it’s very different because here they have a lot more extra”. Both Maria and Olivia also emphasized the big difference in availability of supplies. While Maria commented how “there you need to bring your own things”, Olivia told an even more extreme story of how in Mexico, you are “there with a pencil you have to keep the while year. A little [tiny, one-inch] piece that you are writing with”. Parents in general realized and seemed to appreciate that “here [in the United States] they help with many things in school” (Maria).

Parents did not explicitly say negative things about their educational experiences in Mexico, but there was a general feeling of overwhelming poverty there. When asked to think about what her children might experience going to school in Mexico, Olivia could not even bear to think about it as she commented with tears in her eyes, “No...no, I don’t want to think about this”. In general, parents seemed to acknowledge these differences but did not want to think about them much less dwell on them. As Paula put it, “my family has more future here and this happens because they have rights and in Mexico there are not”.

“As a parent, I want them to be someone brilliant in life”. These immigrant parents had specific goals and dreams for their children and most of these goals were to excel in studying and in gaining the “maximum education” that they could so they could have a better future. Perhaps because of their experiences with schools in Mexico, parents really desired for their kids to excel and have even have better lives than their parents. Work, especially, was something that parents brought up and they expressed goals for their children to have more professional careers than just working in factories. For example, Claudia discussed how her goals for her children were that she didn’t “want them to leave school you know and just end up working in a factory like [her]”. Maria agreed with this thought and exclaimed, “we want them to work but with a different schedule and to have a more flexible hour to leave [work]...so they won’t have problems to ask permission to leave like us”.

During interviews, parents seemed to link better opportunities for work with education and thus desired for their children to get a good education. Often, they

remarked that they wanted their children to “move forward”, wanted “education for [their children]”, and wanted them to “learn a lot and...make a lot of gains”. Parents seemed to realize that education is the key to being successful in life despite the fact that many of these parents did not attain a high educational level themselves. They also seemed to understand that their children had better educational opportunities here in the United States as opposed to Mexican schools.

Aside from studying and advancing in their educational careers, parents also wanted their children in general “to be good people”, to “be better than one and have a good job”, “to better oneself” and “to be someone”. Moreover, apart from parents’ desire for their children to be good people, these Mexican immigrant parents desired for their children to someday be independent. As evidence of this, Paula commented that not only did she want the “best education” for her daughter, but that she hoped she could “by herself, go up [in life] and not depend on anyone”. This may stem from the fact that some of these parents had been dependent on others as part of their immigrant experience and hoped that their children would not do the same. In general, Olivia summed it up best by commenting that “we all want the best and that the kids advance more than anything...I know that as a parent, I want them to be someone brilliant in life”.

“This is a necessity, to relax because it passes”. Based on parents’ experiences with schools in Mexico, their perspective on the transition to kindergarten reflected hope and optimism rather than sheer despair. Parents viewed the transition to school as a life stage that children was necessary for their children to be successful in life. In particular, Paula, commented on her feelings about the transition by saying “it’s not sadness – I was

very happy that she started school because I know that this was going to help her a lot". She compared her feelings about her daughter starting school to the "feeling that moms have like when you have to leave them the first day you have to go to work". Despite feeling "sad in [their] hearts", parents knew that their children starting school was something necessary. They talked about this transition to school as "something they have to do...a stage, they needed to do it, to learn" (Maria).

Parents also revealed a hopeful optimism about the transition as some parents agreed that this transition to school would pass. Lia discussed that although she had "sadness in her heart" she knew that "things [were] going to pass. They are going to pass. Everything will go". Upon reflecting on her feelings about the transition, Maria offered this advice her own children: "that the live in the experience. That the live in the experience, in the moment because K already passed and they can't return to K and they have to go to first". Although this was advice she gave her children, any other parent that was interviewed could have easily offered these wise words to both their own children and to other parents alike. In general, parents seemed to look back on their children's transition experience as something that was so important and necessary but also something that was not worth worrying about too much. In sum, the following, which was Olivia's piece of advice captured how these Mexican immigrant parents reflected on their own educational experiences in Mexico to construct their own more relaxed perspective: "I think that they are going to need to relax...And this is a necessity, to relax because it passes, these concerns pass".

Advice from the Experts

Four professionals served as the expert reviewers for the development of the final version of the FEIT-A. For the demographic items, experts recommended only a few minor changes to the items. The parent educator expert suggested an addition to the item type of educational program that child attended in the last year, which was to include the Parents as Teachers program as an option. The teacher assistant/parent liaison expert suggested some minor changes in to the same item that was more consistent with the Spanish language (i.e. instead of using “atendiendo”, use “asistiendo”). Experts only had a few suggestions for revision with the demographic section and since many of the demographic questions on the FEIT-A were taken from the original FEIT, the demographics section on the FEIT-A was similar to the original.

Experts gave more feedback on the *Parents’ Concerns* section of the FEIT-A than with the demographics section. Three of the four experts suggested that I revise both sets of instructions for the *Parents’ Concerns* scale. For the first section *Parents’ Concerns about your child*, experts recommend including the word “readiness” to make it clear to parents to think about their concerns for their children’s readiness rather than uncertainty about kindergarten. Another suggestion for the instructions included to make them more explicit by asking parents to indicate their concerns “by circling the number that corresponds to how concerned you were”. For the second section, *Parents’ Concerns about yourself as a parent*, one expert suggested adding the sentence “using the same scale, please indicate how concerned you were about each of the following areas” to remind parents that the scale had not changed. Experts also gave feedback on particular

items in the *Parents' Concerns* section to be more specific such as changing the item “Behavior problems (i.e. tantrums)” to read “Difficulty controlling emotions and behavior”. Other suggestions including changing items such as “Getting along with the teacher” to read “Being respectful to the teacher” and changing “Communicating needs and wants” to “Communicating needs and wants *in English*”. Suggestions to rewording items and to be more specific with certain items helped to do two things: 1) eliminate cultural variations in interpretation of more generally stated items and 2) be more culturally appropriate and aligned with the Mexican immigrants’ language and beliefs. Additionally, the parent educator expert suggested adding some items such as “Knowing what is required for Kindergarten registration”, “Knowing information about the bus...”, “Knowing who to talk with about my question/concerns”, “Knowing the expectations for behavior for my child in kindergarten”, and “Knowing the expectations for academics for my child in kindergarten”. The addition of these items, she commented, are reflective of the specific concerns of the Mexican immigrant families she serves.

For the *Parents' Needs*, *Parents' Beliefs about what is Important*, and the *Parents' Satisfaction* scales, experts suggested few revisions or changes to the FEIT-A. One of the Assistant Professor experts suggested that on the *Parents' Needs* scale, the item “Information on what you should have been doing to prepare your child for kindergarten” be split up into two separate items to include both behavior and learning at home. The two new items include “Information about kindergarten behavior expectations” and “Information on what types of activities to do at home with my child”. The parent educator expert suggested adding the following item to the *Parents' Needs*

scale: “Information about the role of each staff support person in the school”. In general, experts offered concrete suggestions on revising the FEIT-A to make it more readable as well as with more specific details with the items to eliminate the parents’ open interpretation of items. Lastly, one expert, the parent educator, offered positive feedback about the survey items and commented that “you incorporated those social skills again as well and I really like this section [*Parents’ Satisfaction* scale]” as well as that many of the included items were “amazing” and that the some of the response scales were “short and simple to understand”. This positive feedback from the parent educator expert, who is a direct service provider to numerous Mexican immigrant families, ensured me that I had developed the FEIT-A to be more culturally appropriate for use with Mexican immigrants.

Discussion – Phase I

The aim of the first phase of this study was to gather detailed information from a small sample of Mexican immigrant parents regarding the phenomena of their experiences with the transition to school. Information from interviews in the first phase was then used to inform adaptation of the FEIT which was used with a larger sample in the second phase of the study.

Critical Dimensions of the Transition Process

Some findings from the first research question emerged as new information. Although literature on experiences with the transition to kindergarten suggests that parents’ needs, concerns, and involvement should be included in transition best practices several new dimensions emerged as a result of this study. The dimension of feeling

welcome is crucial in the transition process not just for all families, but especially for Mexican immigrant families. Since schools can be the first societal institution that many of these Mexican immigrant families come into contact with, assuring that transition best practices incorporate activities to help immigrant families feel welcome and valued is of utmost importance. The dimension of communication is also of equal importance to transition practices. Although there are many parents whose first language is English, schools must realize that the population of schools is changing. With the changing population of children in schools, the population of families involved and interacting with the schools is also changing. Thus, communication is parents' preferred language is critical to ensure proper communication and to increase involvement as well as to ensure Mexican immigrant parents' feel welcome in schools.

Additional findings from parent interviews in Phase I revealed that parents had different levels of anxiety and concern when they reflected on their child's transition to school the prior year. Some parents had more anxiety about the transition regarding things like eating, using the bathroom, and communicating. Other parents had minimal anxiety but expressed feelings of sadness that their child was going to kindergarten. Overall, parents' retrospective thoughts during interviews suggested that once school started, parents began to feel a bit more relaxed about the transition. Once school began, it seemed that parents really started to focus on making sure that their children were making progress and they were doing everything they could as parents to support their children. Findings from further analysis of interview data revealed 19 group themes that were coded into the 7 following categories related to parents' experiences with the

transition: needs, concerns, involvement, feeling welcome, communication is key, knowledge and information gathering, and cultural differences.

Through interviews with Mexican immigrant parents, my goal was to share their stories to inform the measurement development phase of this study. Feedback from experts was then utilized to ensure that the adaptation of the FEIT was appropriate for use with Mexican immigrant parents. As Critical Race Theory argues that immigrant families' race and culture should not be ignored but rather should be acknowledged, understood, and possibly even integrated into school transition best practices, it was critical to collect and understand their voices. By taking the voices of Mexican immigrant parents and incorporating them into the adaptation of the FEIT, questions were developed regarding parents' needs concerning school transition best practices.

Stories and Voices Transformed into a Measure (RQ2)

The second research question questioned what aspects of the original FEIT needed to be revised or extended to appropriately capture the experiences and perspectives of Mexican immigrant parents. There were several different aspects that were part of the original FEIT that were revised and were used in the development of the FEIT-A. These aspects first included rewording survey instructions as well as survey items to them give more detail and make them more culturally appropriate. Second, the concerns section was expanded to include parents' concerns about themselves. Next, in the parents' need section, the researcher revised the response scale to explore Mexican immigrant parents' needs and wants regarding certain transition experiences as well as exploring whether or not parents' received these transition experiences. Also in this scale,

items were transformed and new items were added to better reflect the experiences of Mexican immigrant parents. Fourth, for the parents' beliefs about what's important for the transition section, I revised the response scale to focus on parents' beliefs of how important the item is as well as to explore whether or not parents had this experience. Additionally, like the other scales, specific items were deleted or revised and new items were added based on findings about the critical dimensions of the transition process.

Lastly, since Critical Race Theory focuses on trying to understand the voices of the marginalized, I added a section on the FEIT-A to try and understand parents' satisfaction with their experiences with the transition to kindergarten. Although the base of the original FEIT was retained, many changes were made to more appropriately capture the experiences and perspectives of Mexican immigrant parents. Based on the findings from this study and my own reflection, the FEIT-A improves upon the original FEIT in several ways. First, findings from the current study suggest that *Parents' Concerns* scale and the *Parents' Needs* scale on the FEIT-A have high internal consistency as compared to the original FEIT. It is possible that the modification of items as well as the addition of items to specific scales actually helped to increase the internal consistency of the scales. For example, the *Concerns* section in the original FEIT had an internal consistency of $\alpha = .79$, but the *Parents' Concerns* section in the FEIT-A had a higher internal consistency of $\alpha = .83$. For the *Parents' Needs* scale, I changed the structure of the scale from the original FEIT and thus rather than asking parents about the receipt of transition activities, the FEIT-A also parents about their needs. The internal consistency of the *Needs/Involvement* section from the original FEIT was .78 while the

internal consistency for the *Parents' Needs* scale was $\alpha = .83$ and for the *Parents' Receipt of Transition Experiences* internal consistency was lower at $\alpha = .53$. Both these scales had a lot of missing data and thus findings must take this into consideration. It is possible that by structurally combining the two scales into one table, parents got confused and perhaps using the same type of response scale in the original FEIT would make more sense.

The focus of this part of the discussion is to explain the process of how Mexican immigrant parents' stories and voices were transformed to influence the development of a culturally relevant measure. For the first section of the FEIT-A, questions were developed for parents to tell a little bit about their children. As stated above, Mexican immigrant parents use whoever they can access as a resource for information on the transition to kindergarten including but not limited to their own children. The first two questions on the FEIT-A aimed to get at this idea that children are used as resources by asking parents if the target child was their first child beginning kindergarten and if this was their first child attending this school. For the third question, the researcher kept the question that was already on the original FEIT, which asked parents about the type of child care or educational program that their children were enrolled in last year. Response items were added such as stayed at home with mom or dad, stayed with a relative, or child care program (in center or home) to acknowledge the fact that not all Hispanics enroll their children in formal care. The fourth question was newly created and asked about language use at home with the target child to get at part of the parents' culture, the home language. Other child demographic questions on the original FEIT were deleted from the FEIT-A as

some information such as child ethnicity, child's school, child's teacher, was already obtained from schools.

Concerns section. The next section of the FEIT-A was revised from the original FEIT to be more culturally relevant, but it did use the same response scale. First, directions on filling out the concerns section were modified to be clearer especially for parents that might be less familiar with the response scales used in the FEIT-A. There were two distinct parts to the concerns section with each having separate directions, yet the parts were attached to each other for better flow and the response scale was the same for both parts. In the first part of the concerns section, there were 11 items. For the first item on the concerns section, *academics* was expanded to include recognizing numbers aside from knowing the alphabet, which was on the original FEIT. The second item in this section originally said *behavior problems (e.g. tantrums)* and was modified to say *difficulty controlling emotions and behaviors*. The third item was also changed slightly to read *being respectful to the teacher* rather than *getting along with the teacher*. By modifying and expanding these items slightly, parents who may not be as familiar with American school system will have a clearer picture of what each item is asking about.

Also in the first part of the concern section, item 7 was changed from the wording *toilet training* to *using the bathroom independently (e.g. finding where it is located, having accidents)*. This item in particular was changed due to an overwhelming concern from parents during interviews about their children not knowing where the bathroom would be located or about their children having accidents. For the eighth item, another modification was made to include Mexican immigrant children's potential home

language. Rather than just asking about parents' concerns with their children's ability to communicate, the new item read *communicating needs and wants in English*. Items 9-11 were developed based on concerns from the group themes. These items included addressing parents' concerns with the food provided by the school, riding the bus, and getting into a routine. One item, *child being ready for kindergarten*, was taken out of the revision as the term "ready" may have an entirely different meaning in another culture.

This first part of the concerns section focused entirely on parents' concerns for their *children*, however, two group themes that emerged (concerns for parents and parents' needs for themselves) influenced the creation of the second part of the concerns section that focused on concerns parents had for themselves. Ten separate items regarding parents' concerns for themselves as parents were added based on the group themes that emerged. Items included concerns such as *helping child with homework*, *knowing where things are in the school*, *communicating with teachers and school staff*, etc. Since the aim of the critical race theory and thus the research project is to tell Mexican immigrants parents' stories, the second part of the concerns section really focused on the experiences that parents' had with their children's transition to kindergarten.

Needs section. The second section in the FEIT-A asked parents about the types of things they *wanted* more information on regarding the transition to kindergarten. In the original FEIT, this section was entitled *Help in Transition Planning* and asked parents about things that would have been helpful as parents planned for the transition. During the interview, the researcher got the sense that parents seemed to be doing less planning

and more accessing resources to gain knowledge of what to expect. Therefore, this section including instructions to parents was modified to better address parents' needs and wants during the transition. Items on the original FEIT that asked parents about preschool were deleted as this study focused on the transition to kindergarten not preschool. Additionally, rather than items asking if parents wanted *more* information, the revised items did not assume that parents received any information and rather asked what they needed.

For the first item in this Needs section, the item was revised from the original FEIT to ask parents if they needed information on *what to expect during your child's kindergarten program*. The first item gave examples such as *the process of kindergarten like homework, no nap, lining up, etc.* so Mexican immigrant parents could get a clearer picture what the item was asking. Additionally, rather than just asking about parents if they needed information about their child's new teacher and new school (part of the original FEIT), these items were revised based on qualitative themes that suggested parents believed that getting to know people (teachers or children) prior to entry would be helpful. Moreover, one group theme suggested that parents thought it was important to address the unknown such as navigating the school in transition activities. Therefore, the third and fourth items asked parents about their needs concerning *information about the role of each staff support person* as well as *information about where things were in the new school*. The sixth item in the needs section was also transformed slightly from the original item in the FEIT, which asked what parents should be doing to prepare for the transition. In order to be as specific as possible, this item was transformed to ask parents

if they needed *information on what types of activities to do at home with my child*. Since parents mentioned school to home activities and working together with the schools, phrasing the item in this manner seemed to be more culturally relevant for Mexican immigrant parents.

Three additional items were added to the needs section that were not part of the original FEIT. One new item included asking parents if they needed *information on bilingual language development* since these students grew up with Mexican immigrant parents who had either bilingual households or Spanish-only households. Additionally, one group theme that emerged from the interviews concerned English and Spanish language development so adding this item again helped to make the measure more culturally appropriate. The other two items that were added included asking parents if they needed information on *how to be involved in the classroom* and *how to be involved in their child's learning at home*. Since parents emphasized the importance of involvement and working together with the school to benefit their children, these two items emerged from the group themes. Lastly, in order to examine whether or not parents received the information asked about in this section, parents were also asked to circle yes or no depending on whether or not they received information.

Beliefs about involvement section. The third section asked parents about the types of things or experiences that parents think and believe are important for families when children begin kindergarten. Several of the items in this section were similar to items in the original FEIT, but in the original, the items were in the context of the parental involvement rather than parental beliefs. This particular section was created to

explore Mexican immigrant parents' beliefs and perspectives on types of activities and involvement that they felt are important in the transition to kindergarten because according to critical race theory, it is important to explore their perspectives to advocate for change. Instead of asking parents if they had or wanted an activity, this section aimed to get at Mexican immigrant parents' beliefs because it is unknown if the ways that schools are involving Mexican immigrant parents is actually aligned with their beliefs or transition practices just based on the voices of the majority as Critical Race Theory argues. It is unknown whether or not Mexican immigrant parents believe that specific transition best practices are important and so, this section aimed to address this gap in the literature.

Rather than asking parents if they had, wanted, or did not have nor want the activity as in the original FEIT, parents responding to the FEIT-A were asked if they *believed* these experiences were *not important, somewhat important, or very important*. The first two items were created from separating the original item (*Visited your child's kindergarten classroom and/or elementary school with your child*) into two separate questions as Mexican immigrant parents might view visiting the classroom and getting to know the teachers just as important as visiting the school and finding the locations of places in the school. The third item in this parental beliefs on involvement section was rephrased from the original FEIT and said "*meeting with school personnel about what to expect during the kindergarten year*". Rather than the original item which said "*attended a transition planning meeting with your child's kindergarten staff*", the revised item was

created specifically for Mexican immigrants who seemed to do less formal planning and did more discussing and seeking out knowledge on kindergarten expectations.

Items 4, 5, and 6 were kept the same as the original FEIT and concerned phone calls from teachers, home visits from teachers, and written communication from teachers. For items 7 and 8, rather than just asking parents about their attendance at a kindergarten registration and open house, I developed a better description of each again to provide clarity to Mexican immigrant parents, whose ideas of involvement differed from attending school meetings. Rather, what emerged from interviews is that parents perceived their involvement as doing what they could at home rather than merely attending meetings at the school. Therefore, it is possible that even though Mexican immigrant parents might attend school meetings, they might not be very aware of what each meeting is called or what the purpose of each meeting is since their focus is on being involved at home. I expanded the item on asking parents about their beliefs of kindergarten registration to include *with the principal, kindergarten teachers, and other kindergarten parents and their children*. I expanded the item on asking parents about their beliefs about open house to include *right after school begins*.

Three questions in this section from the original FEIT were deleted because they concerned preschool and annual meeting throughout the kindergarten year and the focus on the questionnaire was on kindergarten rather than preschool as well as the immediate transition period. Furthermore, from themes that emerged from interviews, 7 items were added to the beliefs about involvement scale. Added items included involvement activities related to the following themes: what they want from the school for the kids,

what they want from the school for themselves, communication and being listened to translate to a calm transition, availability of Spanish speakers in schools, and characteristics of teachers/staff that are important. Similar to the needs section, in order to examine whether or not parents received the information asked about in this section, parents were also asked to circle yes or no depending on whether or not they received information.

Satisfaction section. Because this study is grounded in critical race theory, an entire section was added to examine Mexican immigrants' satisfaction with certain aspects of the transition to kindergarten. Since Critical Race Theory aims to advance the voices of the marginalized, this satisfaction section was developed to examine if schools are doing well or if they are missing things according to the perspectives of Mexican immigrant parents. Items in this section asked Mexican immigrant parents to reflect on both their children's and their own satisfaction with the transition. Again items were based on the group themes that emerged from Phase I of this study and included items such as teachers' treatment of the child and parent, the school's involvement activities, communication received from the school, how the school staff listened and answered questions, and the friendliness of school staff to children and parents. Finally, two open-ended items were added to the end of this section in case that not everything is captured in survey items because after all, the purpose of this study grounded in Critical Race Theory is to move towards social justice.

Parent and family information section. The last and final section of the FEIT-A included demographic questions concerning the parent and the family. First, the

instructions to this section were revised slightly to get the participants to *please tell us a bit about you and your family by circling the best response* rather than just saying *some information about you*. Items such as primary caregiver, gender, age, ethnic background, marital status, annual family income, and eligibility for government aid programs remained the same as the original FEIT. One item, parents' highest grade completed, was modified slightly to collapse the response options as Mexican immigrants during interview often discussed the highest grade they completed as by category (primaria, secundaria, etc.) rather than by a specific grade level. A total of 9 items were deleted from the original FEIT and included items such as how long the target child was in custodial care, relationship to child, eligibility for free and reduced lunch, total number of children in home, total number of adults in home, time child in bed last night, time child woke up this morning, is this typical weekday schedule for the child, and did the child sleep through the night. These items were removed because they were not part of the focus of the study nor were they specific to Mexican immigrant parents. Additionally, two items that were specific to the population of focus in this study included items asking where participants were born and whether or not they attended any schooling in the US.

Findings – Phase II

Psychometric Properties of the FEIT-A (RQ3)

In order to answer the third research question regarding the psychometric properties of the FEIT-A during this second phase, three sets of analyses were conducted using quantitative survey data from this pilot study. First, preliminary descriptive analyses were conducted to examine the properties of each item on the questionnaire

including the mean, distribution (skewness and kurtosis), and amount of missingness.

Then, as an indicator of reliability, and more specifically, internal consistency, coefficient alpha was calculated for sets of items linked conceptually (i.e., potential scales with the questionnaire). Finally, a series of exploratory principal components analysis using direct oblimin solution were conducted to explore the structure of the data and nature of the FEIT-A. Results from the descriptive analyses, organized by the scales of the FEIT-A, and results from exploratory principal components analyses are presented below.

Parents' concerns. For both parts of the concerns section, there were 40 surveys that had complete data for these items. The concerns section included two potential scales: *parents' concerns for their children* (11 items) and *parents' concerns for themselves as parents* (10 items). For each item, parents were asked whether they had “no concerns” (0), “a few concerns” (1), “some concerns” (2), or “many concerns” (3).

Descriptive characteristics such as mean values, standard deviation values, and the range of each item are provided in Table 2. The majority of items in these two scales were normally distributed according to skewness and kurtosis values (using a threshold of +/- 1.0 and +/- 2.0, respectively). Two of the items in the *parents' concerns for their children* scale were not found to be normally distributed. These two items were “getting along with other children” (skewness = 2.0 and kurtosis = 4.3) and “being respectful to the teacher” (skewness = 2.4 and kurtosis = 5.4). Both of these two items were both positively and highly skewed indicating that the majority of parents reported being less concerned with getting along with other children and with being respectful to the teacher. This is consistent with literature stating that Latino parents place a great emphasis on the

social aspects of their children's development. Mexican immigrant parents may have less concerns with these two items if they focus on teaching those skills in the home environment prior to school entry. Overall, mean values for the *Parents' Concerns* scale were very low for this scale indicating that most parents had very few concerns related to their children's transition to kindergarten. The two items that parents had the most concerns about (still the mean was closer to *a few* concerns rather than some or many concerns) were "academics" and "communicating needs and wants in English". Internal consistency for the *parents' concerns for their children scale* was high ($\alpha = .83$) as was the internal consistency for the *parents' concerns for themselves as parents scale* ($\alpha = .84$).

Parents' perceived needs. The second section of the questionnaire about *parents' perceived needs* contained 12 items. For this scale, only 26 parents completed the scale perhaps related to the wording, answer format of this section. Importantly, findings for this scale should be interpreted with caution because of the small sample size of only 26 surveys. For each item, parents were asked whether they "did not need" (0), "needed somewhat" (1), or "needed a lot" (2). Descriptive characteristics such as mean values, standard deviation values, and the range of each item are provided in Table 2. All of the items fell within a normal distribution according to commonly used criterion values for skewness and kurtosis. Of the 26 that answered, mean statistics were fairly low indicating that parents reported that they did not need or needed somewhat the items about experiences about the transition.

The two lowest items on this scale were the extent to which parents felt they needed information about where things were in the child's new school and whether or not parents wanted emotional support and encouragement from school staff. This finding indicates that Mexican immigrant parents do not feel that they need more information on where things are in their child's new school. It is possible that they already feel comfortable with the where things are in the school because this is not their first child attending this school. Another explanation is that the location of where things are is not a priority and that they have other more pressing needs. The finding that parents did not report needing emotional support and encouragement from school staff may stem from the idea that Mexican immigrant parents get support and encouragement from other resources not including school staff. As interview data revealed, parents relied on family members, therapists, and even their own children as resources of knowledge, emotional support, and encouragement. Internal consistency for the *parents' perceived needs* scale was very high ($\alpha = .93$) suggesting that the items measure or tap into a general construct of parents' needs.

Parents' receipt of transition support. The next scale, *parents' receipt of transition support*, also contained 12 items. For this scale, parents were asked to indicate whether they received the support by indicating "yes" (1) or "no" (0). For this scale, nineteen parents answered the items in the scale. The low number of respondents could be due to the fact that this scale was combined with the *parents' perceived needs* scale for ease of use (see Appendix F), however, it appears that parents might not have understood that they needed to respond to both whether or not they wanted/needed an item as well as

whether or not they received the item. The majority of items in this scales were normally distributed according to skewness and kurtosis values (using a threshold of +/- 1.0 and +/- 2.0, respectively). However, four of the items in the *parents' receipt of transition support* scale were not found to be normally distributed. The four items were “information on what to expect during your child’s Kindergarten program” (skewness = - 2.3 and kurtosis = 3.6), “information about where things were in your child’s new school” (skewness = - 3.3 and kurtosis = 10.1), “information about academic expectations” (skewness = -2.6 and kurtosis = 5.2), and “information about behavior expectations” (skewness = -2.6 and kurtosis = 5.6). All four items were negatively and highly skewed indicating that the majority of parents indicated that they received these types of transition supports.

For the 19 that answered, mean statistics were fairly high indicating that parents actually did receive many different transition experiences (see Table 2). This is in contrast to what I originally thought and noted in my researcher memo notes. From my own subjective perspective, I did not perceive the schools to be really supporting and offering transition experiences and activities that were culturally appropriate for Mexican immigrant parents. Contrary to my belief, it seems that Mexican immigrant parents are receiving information and activities that support their cultural needs.

The two lowest means suggested that parents were less likely to receive information about the role of each staff support person in school and to receive emotional support and encouragement from kindergarten and school staff. In the *Parents' Needs* scale, parents did not report needing a lot of information about the role of each staff support person (Mean = .60), therefore it is possible that schools already knew this and

prioritized other activities for parents that would support them during their children's transition to school. Also possible is that parents in this study already knew enough about the role of each support person as about half of the sample already had children in school. Similar to what was discussed above regarding emotional support and encouragement, it is likely that parents are getting the majority of their emotional support and encouragement from other sources other than school staff and therefore reported that that did not receive this. Internal consistency for the *parents' receipt of transition support* scale was high ($\alpha = .86$); given the dichotomous nature of these items, Kuder-Richardson 20 was calculated instead of the traditional form of Chronbach's alpha.

Parents' beliefs about what is important. For this scale, parents were asked to indicate whether or not they believed a transition experience and/or activity was important to them. For each item, parents were asked to respond that the item was "not important" (0), "somewhat important" (1), or "very important" (2). Descriptive characteristics such as mean values, standard deviation values, and the range of each item are provided in Table 2. Quantitative findings revealed that items in the third section, *parents' beliefs about what is important for the transition* (15 items), were also for the most part normally distributed. There were 27 parents who answered the items in this scale. Of the 27 that answered, mean statistics for the other items were fairly high indicating that parents believed most items were at least somewhat important to very important. Interestingly, the two items with the highest mean scores were the same two items that also did not fall within a normal distribution.

Two items in this scale, the “importance of school staff that speak my language” (skewness = -3.9 and kurtosis = 16.0) and “interpreters are available” (skewness = -3.7 and kurtosis = 12.7), did not fall within a normal distribution. Both items “importance of school staff that speak my language” and “interpreters are available” were negatively skewed indicating that the distribution of responses point to parents’ placing more importance on these items. Additionally, both of these items had the highest mean values (1.89, 1.93) on this scale indicating that language and having school staff speak their language is of utmost importance. Because language is so integral to an individual’s cultural beliefs and values, it is not surprising that parents in this study placed a high level of importance on the having school staff that speak their language and on having interpreters available. Without having staff that speak parents’ language, not only is it difficult for Mexican immigrant parents to communicate with the school, but it is also indirectly telling parents know that their culture is not valued. Based on this finding, it becomes critical for schools to acknowledge that not every parents’ preferred language is English and that support in parents’ preferred language is important to helping parents feel comfortable with the transition. The internal consistency for the *parents’ beliefs about what is important* scale was high ($\alpha = .84$).

Parents’ transition experiences. For this scale, parents were asked to indicate whether they had the particular experience or activity by indicating “yes” (1) or “no” (0). Descriptive characteristics of each item in this scale are described in Table 2. For the next scale, *parents’ transition experiences*, 23 parents answered the 15 items in the scale. All but 4 of the items were normally distributed. The 4 items that were not normally

distributed were “received a phone call from your child’s kindergarten teacher” (skewness = 2.4 and kurtosis = 3.9), “received a home visit from your child’s kindergarten teacher” (skewness = 3.9 and kurtosis = 13.7), “received a kindergarten open house right after school begins” (skewness = -3.8 and kurtosis = 13.2), and “received school staff that speak my language” (skewness = -5.7 and kurtosis = 32.0). For the first time items concerning receiving a phone call or a home visit from teachers, both were positively skewed indicating that these activities were not something that parents received. These items also had low mean scores (.12 and .06) indicating that parents did not place a high level of importance on phone calls or home visits. Although often phone calls or home visits are recommended as transition best practices, it is possible that these are not priority for Mexican immigrant parents and their children. Additionally, given the increasing pressure and accountability for Kindergarten teachers to increase their student’s instructional time and learning, it is possible that time spent calling parents or on a home visit could best be used with other tasks. The items “received a kindergarten open house right after school begins” and “received school staff that speak my language” were both positively skewed indicating that parents did receive support with the school providing an open house and having staff that speak their language. These two items also had the highest mean scores (.93, .96) indicating that schools are doing a good job of providing these transition experiences for parents. An Open House after school starts enables families to get a better idea of what happens in the classroom and what the kindergarten classroom looks like, which supports Mexican immigrant parents’ needs of getting knowledge about the unknown. Additionally, by providing staff that speak

parents' preferred language, Mexican immigrant parents and their culture feel more welcome and may be more likely to involve themselves in their children's education and school.

For the 23 that answered, mean statistics were fairly high indicating that parents did indicate that they received many different transition experiences. Internal consistency for the *parents' transition experiences* was low ($\alpha = .54$). Given that internal consistency is relatively low among these items, it is possible that they may be more useful or meaningful as an index (rather than a scale) of whether parents experienced these types of transition experiences.

Parents' satisfaction. For this scale, parents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the item by indicating that they were "not satisfied" (0), "somewhat satisfied" (1), or "very satisfied" (2). Descriptive characteristics such as mean values, standard deviation values, and the range of each item are provided in Table 2. The last scale, *parents' satisfaction* regarding the transition to kindergarten (11 items), had all but 1 item fall into a normal distribution. The one item that was not normally distributed was "teachers' treatment of me" (skewness = -2.2 and kurtosis = 4.6). This item is negatively skewed, which indicates that the majority parents were satisfied with teachers' treatment of them. Frequency statistics were run just for this one item to explore it more and findings suggested that 35 of 43 were very satisfied, 7 were somewhat satisfied, and 1 was not satisfied with "teachers' treatment of parents", which could explain the fact that it was not normally distributed.

Again, contrary to my initial thoughts, Mexican immigrant parents perceive that teachers treat them well. This finding could be interpreted in two different ways. First, it is possible that Mexican immigrant parents are satisfied with the teachers' treatment of them because there are interpreters available for parents. If teachers are utilizing school interpreters when communicating with families, this in itself can lead to parents' satisfaction. Another possible explanation for this finding is that based on their experiences with Mexican schools, these Mexican immigrant parents appreciate teachers' treatment because they did not have a lot to compare it to in Mexico. As interview data revealed, schools in Mexico were very poor and with little resources, thus teachers in Mexico may have been really stretched for resources and time and would not have had time to involve parents. By comparing their treatment from teachers here to their more negative experiences in Mexico, it is possible that Mexican immigrant parents felt satisfied because of their frame of reference.

For the *parents' satisfaction* scale, mean scores for each item were quite high given the item ratings range from 0 to 2. High mean scores indicated that Mexican immigrant parents seem to be overwhelmingly satisfied with the different aspects of the transition experience. Parents were most satisfied with the "teachers' involvement in making the transition to kindergarten a positive experience for my child" although parents were very satisfied with all of the other items as well. This finding indicates how important the teachers' role is, not only with teaching children, but also in making the experience a positive one for both children and families. Internal consistency for the parents' satisfaction was high ($\alpha = .91$).

Exploratory Principal Components Analysis

The primary method for evaluating the psychometric properties of the FEIT-A in this initial pilot study consisted of the descriptive statistics and coefficient alphas reported above. In addition, principal components analyses were conducted to better understand the structure of the measure. These are considered purely exploratory given the small sample size and pilot nature of the data. Results are discussed for the scales with the full (or almost full) sample in the following section. I did not run a Principal Components Analysis for 4 scales (*parents' perceived needs, parents' receipt of transition support, parents' beliefs about what is important, and parents' transition experiences*) because it would not be valid to run them given the formatting of the items that contributed to large amounts of missing data.

When the principal components analysis was run for the *parents' concerns for their children scale*, three factors emerged (with an eigenvalue greater than 1) that explained 64% of the variance. However, a review of the factor structure indicated that there was only one item that loaded into the third factor. Therefore a two-factor solution was attempted and then selected because it best satisfied criteria for retention. Criteria for retention included item loadings of .395 or greater and that each factor should account for more than 10% of the total variance (Cattell, 1966). Conceptually, the two –factor solution was difficult to interpret and did not seem to explicitly represent two distinct areas. Instead, the *parents' concerns for their children scale* may be more useful as individual items or as a scale measuring the one aspect of parents' concerns regarding the transition to school. The high level of internal reliability suggests the latter.

Similarly, when the principal components analysis was run for the items regarding *parents' concerns for themselves*, three factors emerged (with an eigenvalue of 1 or above) that explained 65% of the variance. Again, conceptually, the factors did not seem to represent separate and conceptually distinct areas, so a two-factor solution was attempted as well. Even with the two-factor solution, no clear distinctions could be made conceptually. Therefore this scale may be more useful functioning as a scale with one factor measuring *parents' concerns for themselves*.

When the principal components analysis was run for the *parents' satisfaction* scale, 3 factors emerged that explained 77% of the variance (eigenvalue = 1). For the first factor, the strongest factor loading included “teachers’ involvement in making the transition to kindergarten a positive experience for me as a parent”. The three other items that loaded into the first factor included “teachers’ involvement in making the transition to kindergarten a positive experience for child”, “school’s involvement in making the transition to kindergarten a positive experience for child”, and “communication I received from the school about my child’s transition to kindergarten”. This first factor may represent parents’ satisfaction with how they perceived both teachers and schools treated them and their children. The two highest factor loadings for the second factor were “child’s experience transitioning to kindergarten” and “my experience as a parent with my child’s transition to kindergarten” (factor loadings = .93 and .93) while the third strongest loading was “friendliness of school staff to my child” followed by “friendliness of school staff to my family” and “how school staff listened and answered question”. This factor seems to represent a construct about parents’ satisfaction with feelings in

general about their experiences and about the how welcome they felt during the transition. The third factor only had two item loadings that represented “teachers’ treatment of child and teachers’ treatment of me”. Similar to the first factor, this factor may represent parents’ satisfaction with how they felt they and their children were treated. Therefore because the factors seemed similar in their factor loadings and because the first factor explained 53% of the variance suggesting that this scale might be best used as a one-factor scale measuring the construct *parents’ satisfaction*.

Participation in Early Childhood Programs and Parents’ Experiences (RQ4)

The fourth and final research question examined the relationship between participation in an early childhood program (defined here as including a child care program, special education preschool, Pre-Kindergarten, and Head Start) and families’ transition experiences. Specifically, it was hypothesized that Mexican immigrant parents’ whose children had participated in an early childhood program would report having fewer concerns (both for their children and themselves) and more positive feelings (satisfaction) regarding their child’s transition to kindergarten. T-tests were conducted to examine differences between parents’ whose children participated in an early childhood program and those who did not towards parents’ concerns and parents’ satisfaction with their children’s transition to kindergarten, are reported. Findings from t-tests failed to reveal a statistically reliable difference between the mean number of *parents’ concerns for their children* such that parents with children enrolled in an early childhood program has ($M = .80$, $sd = .59$) and that parents who did not have children enrolled in an early childhood program ($M = .57$, $sd = .34$), $t(41) = 1.531$, $p = .133$, $\alpha = .05$). Interestingly, mean scores

suggest that parents with children enrolled in an early childhood program might actually have a higher level of concern. It is possible that these parents might have more awareness of the different expectations of kindergarten based on knowledge gained from their child's enrollment in an early childhood program. Another explanation is that parents with children enrolled in an early childhood program have to transition their children from an environment that the children are already familiar with and from teachers that they are already familiar with, to a new environment with new teachers and new children. Even though parents with children not enrolled in programs might also worry about this transition, they might not have a frame of reference to reflect on and thus might have fewer concerns with their children being respectful to the teacher or separating from the family. Although these mean scores might suggest differences in levels of concerns with parents of children enrolled versus not enrolled, findings from t-tests show that parents' concerns were similar regardless if their children had participated in an early childhood program the year before kindergarten.

When examining the relationship between participation in an early childhood program and *parents' concerns for themselves as parents*, findings from a t-test did also not reveal any significant differences ($t(41) = .325, p = .747, \alpha = .05$). Parents whose children participated in an early childhood program the year before kindergarten did not have significantly different concerns for themselves when compared to parents whose children did not participate in an early childhood program. It is possible that this hypothesis was not proven because of the great variation in early childhood programs as well as parents' knowledge seeking abilities. As discussed above, interview participants

discussed the numerous ways that they sought knowledge and information concerning the transition to kindergarten. Few, if any, mentioned using an early childhood program as a resource. Rather, parents seemed to seek out trusted individuals including family, speech therapists, and parent educators for information to support their concerns about the transition. Perhaps it is not the early childhood programs that are addressing parents' concerns, but rather individuals that parents trust and that are accessible to them for support.

To further answer research question 4, an independent samples t-test was run to determine if parents' satisfaction differed between the two groups. Results indicated that there were not any significant differences between groups ($t(41) = .129, p = .898, \alpha = .05$). Potentially because parents in both groups reported the same amount of concerns, they were in general satisfied with how the transition transpired. If parents had more concerns and these concerns were potentially not addressed, they may have been less satisfied with the transition. Additionally, because of the potential large variation among early childhood programs, Mexican immigrant parents may have had good experiences in general the year before kindergarten this enabling them to begin the transition already satisfied and thus report satisfaction about the transition.

Discussion – Phase II

The aims of the second phase of this study were to examine the psychometric properties of the adapted measure as well as to explore the relationship between participation in an early childhood program and parents' transition experiences. Results from preliminary data analyses on each scale of the FEIT-A, in general, revealed that the

majority of items were normally distributed and the internal consistency of most scales was high. Additionally, no significant differences were found between participation in an early childhood program and parents' concerns or satisfaction regarding transition experiences. However, the relatively small sample size for the pilot study of the adapted measure (and some missing data issues for a few of the scales) represents a major limitation of this second phase. Research memo notes helped to explain the small sample size and are discussed in the following section.

Properties of the Scales of the FEIT-A

Aside from challenges with recruiting Mexican immigrant parents to complete the FEIT-A survey and a small sample size, the psychometric properties of the FEIT-A were examined, which was the third research question in the current study. Several issues emerged from data analyses concerning the structure of some of the scales of the FEIT-A, which may have resulted in missing data on specific scales. Given some modifications to the recruitment strategies of Mexican immigrant parents as described in the following section, future research should continue to evaluate the psychometrics of the FEIT-A with multiple large samples.

Despite some of these issues, pilot data suggested that all scales on the FEIT-A demonstrated good internal consistency suggesting that these scales were measuring the construct they were intended to measure. Reflecting back on the development of the FEIT-A, I was more deliberate and purposeful than I originally thought in developing specific scales to measure specific constructs. Because interview data revealed such meaningful themes and dimensions of the experiences of Mexican immigrant parents and

because of the way that the original FEIT was organized into scales, findings of good internal consistency are not surprising.

Items that were more skewed could suggest several different issues. First, it is possible the wording of the items affected how parents responded to them. Since the majority of the sample (61%) only completed middle school, the literacy levels might not be that high thus increasing the chances of parents not fully being able to read each item or not being able to fully understand each item. Moreover, researcher memos containing feedback from point persons suggested that Mexican immigrant parents are not familiar with survey methods and thus, may have easily gotten confused especially if this was the first time they ever filled out a survey. Third, the recruitment packet sent to potential participants contained a lot of information including the cover letter, the IRB consent form, and then the 8-page survey. Given the demands of parents, much less immigrant parents, paperwork of this magnitude could create an obstacle, and filling out a lengthy survey may not have been accomplished in one sitting. Therefore, it is possible that parents who put the survey down to return to it later lost some of the translation with the instructions, causing them to either not answer certain items or not to answer them with their true belief. Lastly, the structure and format of the FEIT-A could have contributed to the non-normal distribution of some the items and excessive missingness for the items regarding parents' needs. Because of the way that the questions were asked concerning parents' need and received needs, parent participants may have gotten confused and did not answer one response for each scale but rather responded with just one response across

both scales. This structural issue could have resulted in items not being normally distributed as well as a lot of missing data in these scales.

One definite modification that I will make to the FEIT-A will be to separate the *Parents' Perceived Needs* scale from the *Parents' Receipt of Transition Experiences* scale so that parents will only have to answer one response per item rather than two responses per item that represent different constructs. Similarly, I will also need to structurally separate the *Parents' Beliefs on what is Important* scale from the *Parents' Transition Experiences* scale to ensure parents are not confused with their number of responses.

Early Childhood Program Predicting Parents' Experiences

The fourth research question examined whether or not participation in early childhood programs predicted different transition experiences such as fewer concerns and higher satisfaction as measured by the FEIT-A. Parents in both groups were found to have similarly low levels of concern about the transition to school while parents in both groups were found to have similar rates of high satisfaction with the transition to school. These findings suggest that Mexican immigrant parents regardless of where their children were prior to kindergarten do not seem to have significant concerns. Contrary to the literature that suggests parents are getting more information and more preparation about the transition to kindergarten from early education programs, results from the current study suggested otherwise. It is possible that the type of early childhood program really makes a difference in terms of preparing and supporting parents with the transition to kindergarten. Early childhood programs that have parent education component and a real

focus on transition both children *and* families might be the programs that help parents to be less concerned about the transition. It is also possible that these early childhood programs did not make that much of a difference in terms of parents' level of concerns because they were not equipped to support Mexican immigrant parents. Although findings from the study suggest that schools have available interpreters, early childhood programs may not have interpreters or the resources to be able to adequately support parents to effectively decrease their level of concern regarding the transition.

Describing Parents' Transition Experiences

Survey findings suggested that overall, Mexican immigrant parents did reported having few concerns regarding the transition. This was surprising to me because I believed that Mexican immigrant parents would have many concerns due to the differences between their culture and the American school system. There are a couple of possible interpretations for the finding that parents reported few concerns. First, for about half the sample, this was not their first child attending kindergarten. It is possible that parents already had some base knowledge and knew more of what to expect given that they had other children that had already been through the transition. Secondly, the timing of when parents received and completed the surveys suggested their children had been attending school for almost one full month and so once children started school, some of parents' initial concerns were greatly diminished. The two items that parents had the most concerns about based on the reported means were "academics" and "communicating needs and wants in English". Parents' concern with communicating in English makes sense given that over half of the sample spoke very little English in their home.

Additionally, parents' concerns about "academics" can be closely linked with their concern about communicating in English since academics are taught and assessed in English in the American school system.

Aside from having few concerns, Mexican immigrant parents reported being quite satisfied with their transition experiences. Perhaps because of Mexican immigrant parents' frame of reference associated with the lack of resources in Mexican schools, they were content with their transition experiences in the American school system. If Mexican immigrants did not have anything negative to compare the American schools to, perhaps they would have been less likely to be satisfied or would have been more critical of their transition experiences. Another possible explanation that Mexican immigrant parents reported being satisfied with the transition is that it is possible that their sense of self affected their perceptions. Mexican immigrant parents in this sample spoke mostly Spanish, were not well-educated (over half only completed middle school), and made less than \$25,000 annually. These factors coupled with stressors that are unique to immigrants could result in parents having low sense of self thus resulting in lower expectations for the transition and thus higher satisfaction.

Revelations from Memo Notes

Findings from researcher memo notes told an interesting, yet critical story about the recruitment of Mexican immigrant parents for the survey portion of this study. Researcher memo notes were taken during the survey data collection phase when the researcher had contact with participating school staff or point people either via phone or in person. Although I expected to take notes especially throughout phase II, I did not

expect to get such informative feedback from school staff and point people concerning the survey and its use with the Mexican immigrant population.

Each elementary school was different in terms of student composition and the resources that were available. When looking at response rates, Randleman Elementary had the lowest response rate out of the four schools. Although I did not have demographic data on parents that did not complete the survey, it is interesting that parents at Randleman did not complete it. There are a few possible explanations for this low response rate. Upon reflecting and examining researcher memo notes, I was not surprised by this low response rate because teachers' perceived attitudes towards parental involvement were negative. After contacting the principal about speaking with the teachers to ensure surveys were delivered and to answer any questions they had, I was invited to attend the kindergarten teachers' monthly Professional Learning Communities (PLC) meeting. I walked into the meeting as one or two teachers were still arriving and met five teachers and the lead teacher sitting at a large rectangular table. They looked at me and so I began by introducing myself and asking them if they had any surveys to which they responded they did not. When I prompted them further by asking them their parent participation in general, teachers told me with both their body language and their words that they really did not expect parents to participate because that was just the way they were. This attitude in itself was so surprising to me that I thanked them for their time and quickly left the meeting feeling defeated and not at all welcome. In fact, I could not wait to get out of the school. Considering that I as a professional and fellow employee of these teachers did not feel welcome, I wondered how parents, much less Mexican

immigrant parents, would feel during interactions with these teachers. Perhaps because of the teachers' negative perceptions of parental involvement, the parents actually do not participate and thus a lower number of surveys were completed from Randleman Elementary.

Additional information emerged after speaking with point persons that had been supportive and assisting in each of the school areas. In the Liberty area, the point person gave me feedback concerning why a few parents decided at first not to fill out the survey. Two parents, when asked about the survey, told the point person that they thought it was voluntary. She explained that it was voluntary and only to fill it out if they wanted to, but both parents did end up filling out the survey after their contact with the point person. It is possible that because Mexican immigrant parents are overburdened with paperwork from the schools, being parents, and in general their own lives (potentially including multiple children), they did not feel inclined to fill out the survey and read that it was voluntary and put it to the side. Upon discussing the survey with the point person, a trusted individual from the school, these parents went back to look at the specifics of the consent form and survey and decided to fill it out. Again, it is possible that once approached by trusted individuals, parents gave the survey a closer look.

In the Ramseur area, researcher memo notes revealed that the point person was able to touch base with several parents that were potential survey participants. The point person told me that because of the large number of children that had registered for Kindergarten, Ramseur Elementary added another Kindergarten classroom after the school year had already started. The new classroom opened right in the middle of survey

data collection and thus some kindergarten students were shifted from one overcrowded classroom to the new one. During the transition, the point person explained, the substitute teacher may not have sent home surveys and/or surveys got misplaced in the school before they even got sent home. Therefore, some potential parent participants never received the survey at all. Since this information was relayed back to me, the point person asked me to resend the surveys with the kindergarten students that got placed in the new classroom to ensure delivery of the surveys. Moreover, the point person received some questions pertaining to entire survey process as parent participants told her that they were not really sure what they needed to do. The point person assured me that the feedback she was getting from parents was that they wanted to help, but with all of the paperwork, they did not feel confident in what they needed to do to help so they just did not do anything at all. Interestingly, the point person suggested that it would be a good idea to get a group of the parents together to fill out the survey in one room so that she could assist them as necessary. Although this was a good suggestion, the timing did not allow for this group to be possible as data collection was on a fast pace.

One point person was assigned to both Southmont and Randleman Elementary Schools. The point person worked at Randleman Elementary for 10 years and is currently the ESL Program Liaison for Randolph County Schools. Researcher memo notes from e-mails and phone conversations were used to gather information on the issues surrounding recruitment of Mexican immigrant parents for the Phase II of the study. As a cultural insider, this point person told me that, “A follow-up phone call will most certainly be beneficial. I believe you will get good responses” when I first relayed that I was not

getting a good response from Randleman and Southmont. She reminded me on a phone conversation that it all “goes back to a trust issue” and if relationships are built, the Latinos always will participate. I spoke to her about my observations and interactions with the Kindergarten teachers and school staff at Randleman and how the front office staff were not friendly and how teachers told me that low participation was expected and normal with their parents. She commented that she has told teachers and staff that if they expect very little, they will not get anything in return. She also reminded me that school personnel are “taxed to the hills” but that she has reminded them that body language and how they react to parents really determines how much Hispanic parents participate. The point person also told me how culturally it is changing. She told me about a conversation she had recently with a Mexican immigrant parent and how that parent suggested that the Mexican culture is changing from one that focuses on the family to one that focuses on the “dollar”. This particular parent told her that it seems that nowadays having a bigger bank account is more important than being there for the kids. That the kids are very materialistic and that Mexican immigrant parents really bend over backwards to give them their wants in addition to their needs, which therefore causes them to focus on money. There is also a sort of generational shift, according to this point person, in which Mexican immigrant parents become reliant on their children to help navigate and guide their interaction with such institutions as school. She gave me an example that 62% of Latino families at Randleman High School have a phone number on file that does not work. She continued on to tell me that the only individuals that benefit from this are the kids because their parents will not know if they are in trouble. These families, she told

me, rely on their children as interpreters and as “gatekeepers” for their family. The families rely on their children for everything thus decreasing their own control and abilities as parents. Information gathered from the research memo notes gathered from point people was both eye-opening and will be discussed further below in terms of implications for further research with this population.

Exploration of Factors in Each Scale

Results from exploratory principal components analysis revealed that 2-5 factors that were appropriate for each scale. For all of the scales, it was extremely difficult to conceptually explain why certain items loaded into each factor. For some scales, the first factor explained over half of the variance, which suggested that some scales might be best used as one single scale measuring one factor/construct. Some of the scales may in fact be measuring different topic areas within the construct (i.e. parents’ concerns for their children), but not necessarily have different subscales of concerns. This could be the reason that overall, the internal consistency of the FEIT-A scales were high. Overall, results from quantitative findings from Phase II indicated that despite some potential structural and wording issues, the FEIT-A demonstrated good internal consistency and should continue to be revised and piloted again.

CHAPTER VII

OVERALL DISCUSSION

This central aim of this study was to develop a measure of parents' experiences and perspectives related to their children's transition to school that is appropriate for use with Mexican immigrant families. The measure development process used a mixed methods approach. First, qualitative interview data were used to adapt an existing measure (McIntyre et al., 2007) for use with Mexican immigrant parents. Then, the reliability and validity of the revised measure were evaluated using pilot data gathered from a sample of 44 Mexican immigrant parents of new kindergarteners in the midst of the transition. As described in the phase-specific result and discussion sections above, both phases of the measure development process provided valuable insights about Mexican families' experiences with the transition to school and our ability to measure these experiences using survey methods. Key findings included seven critical dimensions of the transition experience, which were included in the revision of the FEIT, as well as findings of high internal consistency for the majority of scales in the FEIT-A. Beyond addressing the four specific research aims, data from this two-phase project revealed interesting results in five areas that warrant additional consideration. The following five areas will be covered in the subsequent section: parents' general satisfaction with the experiences they've had, recruitment and measurement issues, implications for scale

development, implications for practice, as well as Critical Race Theory themes of social justice.

Parents' Satisfaction with Their Experiences

Parents in this study seemed to be highly satisfied with the transition to kindergarten. There are a few possible explanations of this. First, one explanation is that schools are doing a good job of supporting Mexican immigrant parents through the transition. Despite all of these schools having different resources, parents may be getting just enough support and help to satisfy them and their children. Second, it is possible that parents' satisfaction with the transition stems from Mexican immigrants' cultural belief that the transition is a "stage of life" and that "that it will pass". According to parents during interviews, their perspective of the transition was not one of great despair but rather one that they accepted and realized was necessary for the benefit of their children. This optimistic and more relaxed and culturally-based point of view could explain why Mexican immigrant parents in this study were overall satisfied with their transition experiences.

Third, the Mexican immigrant parents in this study were not highly educated, which could suggest that they desire for their children to do better than them and to attend and finish school. This belief or desire might indicate that Mexican immigrant parents would be less critical and therefore more satisfied with their transition experiences because they view the transition as a first step in their child's journey to a good education. Finally, the majority of parents in this sample was born in Mexico and thus had lived in and experienced another culture that they did not feel they had "rights" in.

Parents' satisfaction with the transition could be related to their thoughts on the United States being a land of opportunity where their children will have rights and amnesty as compared to their home country of Mexico. These Mexican immigrant parents in this study come from varied backgrounds; however, they have a common culture that really shapes their beliefs and perspectives. Their cultural beliefs and perspectives thus influence their experiences with their children's transition to kindergarten undoubtedly. Although research questions for the current study have been answered, suggestions to continue to advance the voices of these Mexican immigrant parents and their experiences with their children's transition to kindergarten are proposed in the following section. Aside from these findings that were discussed in previous sections, other interesting issues and implications emerged from this mixed methods study.

Recruitment and Measurement Issues

Researcher memo notes revealed many different suggestions for increasing the response rate for this population. For example, memo notes revealed the role that trust plays in the response rate of this Mexican immigrant population. Trustworthiness of the source/researcher of the survey may determine whether or not participants decide to fill out the survey. Some feedback from memo notes suggested that parents saw on the cover letter that their participation was voluntary and then figured they did not need to look at it further. Upon finding out that the research project was merely to get their opinions on the transition to school by filling out a survey for a trusted source, participants agreed to and completed the survey. Additionally, feedback from memo notes suggested that parents were confused about the process of the study and felt a bit overwhelmed with all of the

paperwork included in the survey packets. Parents felt like they needed assistance to complete the paperwork and did not want to do so incorrectly so did not fill it out at all. Other research memo data also supported the idea of building relationships and trustworthiness to increase response rates. The lack of trustworthiness in combination with the length of the paperwork, therefore, appears to be one issue that arose with recruitment and response rate. Therefore, researcher memo notes can contribute to the revision of recruitment procedures as well as to the revision of the FEIT-A.

A few suggestions for improving recruitment procedures and gaining the trustworthiness of participants are suggested in this section. First, assigning point people who already have a built-in trusting relationship with potential participants is important. Rather than just distributing the surveys through children at school, it might be better to have point people verbally discuss the survey with potential participants and then directly hand them a survey packet if they choose to participate. Second, the idea of filling out the survey in a support group type setting was actually recommended by one point person. By allowing potential participants to meet in one physical space to fill out the survey together would enable them to be in the presence of a support person or point person and thus they might feel more comfortable in filling out the survey. Moreover, by filling out the survey in a group and with the support of a trustworthy person, participants might be more likely to ask for clarification on instructions or survey items that they do not understand. This may result in a lot less missing data as well as increased feelings of comfort and support for survey participants.

Lastly, despite demonstrating good preliminary internal consistency, several issues emerged with the adapted measure that are important to consider. First, four of the six scales of the FEIT-A had very small samples sizes. The structure of these particular scales may have confused parents as they structurally appeared as one scale where parents had instructions to circle two times or for both scales. The missing data from these four scales showed that parents seemed to be confused with the need to answer on both scales. Thus, it seems necessary to visually separate all four scales for ease of use by future participants. Secondly, one scale, *parents' transition* experiences, had low internal consistency. It is possible that there is not a need for this scale and that it should be more descriptive in nature. Continuing to gather feedback on this specific scale is important in determining whether or not to keep it in the FEIT-A. Additionally, although immigrant status can be defined as country of origin, it may also be important to include an item regarding length of time in the United States as this may be a better indicator of immigrant status.

Implications for Scale Development

The current study adapted a measure to be more culturally relevant to the Mexican immigrant population. By piloting this survey, this was a first step to examining the reliability and validity of the adapted measure with the Mexican immigrant population. However, much more work needs to be done to ensure the tool will be valid and reliable. I have several recommendations for next steps in making this tool reliable and valid. First, it seems important to get qualitative feedback from parents as they are filling out the survey. To gather feedback item by item would enable me to really

evaluate how participants are interpreting the items as well as which items might be causing problems or confusing. Gathering feedback could include administering the survey in person and taking notes on questions asked or where clarification was needed. I could also gather feedback on the FEIT-A by conducting a focus group to get parents input and questions on the survey. If I had done this prior to piloting the adapted measure for this study, I may have already structurally separated scales to avoid confusion in four of the scales, which would likely have resulted in a lot less missing data. Another recommendation is to continue to pilot the adapted FEIT in different samples with parents that have children in different school contexts. For example, it is important to survey Mexican immigrant parents who have children that attend schools that have a lower percentage of Hispanic students as their experiences may be vastly different from the current sample. Also, it is important to sample parents from different counties and regions in North Carolina and across the United States. By sampling parents in various areas and contexts, it will further validate the reliability and validity of the FEIT-A.

In addition, suggestions measure development based on the findings of this study include the continued use of mixed methods particularly qualitative methodology both at the beginning of the study and the end of the study. Qualitative interviews from the current study informed the adaptation of the FEIT. Similarly, continued qualitative interviews or focus groups could be used to further inform the revision of the FEIT-A since quantitative data revealed some issues with the FEIT-A. Additionally, simply asking Mexican immigrant parents about the ways to best get their experiences and

perspectives regarding this phenomenon might lead to different ideas regarding measurement development.

Implications for Practice

Both interview data and survey data suggested that Mexican immigrant parents believe it is important to be involved in the transition activities. Research in this area suggests that Latinos in general may be less involved in school than Caucasian parents, however the current study suggests that Mexican immigrant parents are involved and attending activities offered regarding transition experiences. Findings from the *parents' transition experiences* scale suggested that parents did indicate they received many different transition experiences. However, it is possible that although parents indicated they received transition experiences and involvement, they may only be passively participating. This may be due to the idea that Mexican immigrant parents believe in different types of involvement than what is offered by schools, whose practices are inherently reflect the beliefs of White, middle-class families. According to findings from the current study, Mexican immigrants might be more likely to be involved through participation with in-home activities such as reading, letter games, etc. Additionally, Mexican immigrant parents might need a more direct invitation to be involved at school in ways such as volunteering in the classroom and attending evening meetings. If a trusted source from the school personally invites Mexican immigrant parents to be involved in an activity at school, they might be more likely to be involved. Moreover, if Mexican immigrant parents are given insight on what to expect at involvement activities

(i.e. interpreters will be available, type of activities they will be asked to do, etc.), they might be more likely to be involved and to participate.

CRT Themes of Social Justice

Despite findings that suggested that Mexican immigrant parents have few concerns and are highly satisfied with the transition to school, findings should be interpreted with caution. The small sample size is one limitation of the study and thus participants who filled out this survey might be parents who are already comfortable with sharing their voices and they potentially might feel less marginalized due to certain characteristics that they possess. The large amount of Mexican immigrant parents who did not fill out the survey may have not felt like their opinion or voice mattered due to historically being discriminated against and due to the racism present in our society. From the findings of this study, we should not assume that all Mexican immigrant parents are satisfied with their experiences with the transition to school. We should also not assume that transition practices are fully meeting the needs of Mexican immigrant parents. In order to continue to the commitment to social justice, we must continue to give Mexican immigrant parents opportunities to share their voices about their experiences with the transition to kindergarten. Our work is not finished until we change the structures of racism that are embedded in our society. We must continue to engage in research in this topic area that acknowledges that Mexican immigrant families have strengths that should be then integrated into the educational system.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings from the current study have important implications for future research in this area as well as for policies and programs. Mexican immigrant parents were chosen as the focus of this study because they are a marginalized racial group that has yet to be able to share their voices about their experiences with their children's transition to kindergarten. Racial inequality could easily be present in school transition practices as transition practices undoubtedly reflect the beliefs and values of the dominant group. However, findings from this study revealed that Mexican immigrant parents' have specific needs and desires for their experiences during the transition to school. Without a commitment to understanding, acknowledging, and giving Mexican immigrant parents a voice, transition practices would remain status quo. Now and with continued research, schools, programs, and policymakers will have the information and stories they need to eliminate the racial inequality that is present in school transition practices.

Strengths and Limitations

All research has strengths and limitations based on the methods chosen and the context of the study. For this study, a major strength was the use of mixed methods to inform the development of the FEIT-A. Using a mixed method design allowed the proposed project to offer explanations that go above and beyond those possible with the use qualitative or quantitative methods alone (Castro, Kellison, Boyd, & Kopak, 2010).

Without the use of qualitative methods, I would not have understood the critical dimensions of the transition process as described by Mexican immigrant parents. Without this understanding, I would not have been able to revise and expand the original FEIT to be more culturally appropriate for Mexican immigrant parents. A second strength of this study is that I used several sources of information to meet the study's aims. Mexican immigrant parents, both some whose children had just completed kindergarten and some whose children are currently in kindergarten, were the main source of information in this study. However, I also utilized professionals in the field who contributing a great amount of depth and knowledge to the study's aims. Additionally, another surprising source of important information related to the study's aims was point persons. Through conversations with them, I was able to expand my knowledge further on the use of the FEIT-A with Mexican immigrant parents. Lastly, the schools and their staff members were another source of information which assisted me to answer the research questions of this study. The school context, including characteristics of office staff (i.e. friendliness, acknowledging of others, etc.) and kindergarten teachers, offered some insight into who Mexican immigrants parents interact with in their children's schools.

A third strength of this study includes my own personal characteristics and skills that have including that I am bilingual. Being bilingual, I was therefore able to interview parents myself and really immerse myself in the study by talking with parents during interviews and visiting the schools. Moreover, I work as a support person to the parents I serve through a home visitation program called Parents as Teachers and am an employee of the Randolph County School System, where the data was collected. Because I have

worked as a support person to many Mexican immigrant parents, I am extremely comfortable with them and this likely helped me ease parents into the interview and open up to me as well. Another strength of the study is that I used a careful process to translate the measure. A bilingual Mexican immigrant Randolph County School employee assisted me by first translating the FEIT-A into Spanish. Then, a different bilingual Mexican immigrant, also a Randolph County School employee, reviewed each word on the FEIT-A to assure it was translated correctly. By using these two Mexican immigrants, who are both parents themselves, who are both involved in daily interaction with Mexican immigrant parents, and who both live and work in Randolph County, there was a greater likelihood that they used Spanish words and phrases that are common to Mexican immigrants living in Randolph County. Lastly, an additional strength of this study is the timeliness of the topic as Latino children are quickly becoming the largest minority with predictions that 1 in 4 children will be Latino by the year 2030 (Hernandez et al., 2007).

Despite having many advantages to the current study, several limitations should be noted as well. A major limitation was the low response rate from the survey portion of this study. Suggestions for increasing response rates in future studies include interviewing and talking with parents who either did fill out the survey or did not fill it out to gather feedback on what worked and what did not. Because of their unique experience emigrating to this country and the challenges they face, it is likely that Mexican immigrants need to have personal contact from a trusted source before filling out any survey regardless if it was sent home through the schools, which they seem to respect. One point person actually suggested that this might be a reason that many

surveys had not been returned. A second limitation is the fact that this study provides only preliminary evidence for the reliability and validity of the FEIT-A. Although the initial results seem promising, more research is needed to gain greater psychometric support for the FEIT-A. A third limitation is the issue of timing of when the qualitative data was collected and when the quantitative data was collected. Qualitative interviews asked parents to be retrospective in reflecting on their experiences with the transition to kindergarten from one year earlier. On the other hand, quantitative surveys asked parents who were in the midst of the transition to reflect on their experiences with the transition. It is possible that parents who participated in the interviews and who were asked to retrospectively reflect framed their experiences in a more positive manner as they had already been through the transition and were moving on to the next phase of their child's educational career. Conversely, parents who filled out the survey were asked to reflect on the transition while they were still in the midst of it, which may have resulted in higher anxiety levels or levels of concern. It is therefore important to consider the time frame when examining parents' experiences with their children's transition to school.

Implications for Future Research

In order to continue to advance the voices of these Mexican immigrant parents and their experiences with their children's transition to kindergarten, I propose the following recommendations for continued research in this area. First, recruitment procedures for Mexican immigrant parents need to be further explored and examined. As the Ramseur point person suggested, perhaps Mexican immigrant parents would feel more comfortable filling out the survey with the presence and support of a trusted person

or cultural insider. Additionally, gathering qualitative feedback in the form of interview or focus groups might be important to do so that Mexican immigrant parents can share their voices about the process of recruitment and the process of filling out the survey. Second, although IRB forms are necessary, perhaps a modification to IRB forms is prompted as IRB consent form templates may not necessarily be culturally appropriate for Mexican immigrants. A third recommendation is that future research should include revising the FEIT-A to address the issues that arose in the current study. Re-structuring specific scales of the FEIT-A so that it is easily understood by parents will be important in continuing this work. As Critical Race Theory is a movement for social justice, research on Mexican immigrant parents' experiences with their children's transition to kindergarten should continue so it "can catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar dysconscious racism" (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 16).

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APPENDIX A

PARENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today and for taking the time to talk with me. I am interested in learning about parents' experiences with their child's transition to school (beginning kindergarten), so I would like to ask you some questions related to this topic. There are no right or wrong answers to any of my questions. I just want to know what you think about your child's experience starting school. I value your opinion because you are the parent of a young child. Do you have any questions before we begin? My first question is...

Getting some background:

1. Please tell me a little bit about your child. (for example...)
 - What does your child like to do?
 - What does your child not like to do?
 - Did he/she attend child care or Pre-K before starting school?

Kindergarten Experiences:

2. Overall, how would you describe your child's Kindergarten year? How did it go?
 3. What did *your child* like most about Kindergarten?
 4. What did *your child* like least about Kindergarten?
 5. What did *you* like most about your child's Kindergarten year? Least?
- Ok, now I'd like to ask you some questions about the expectations, hopes, and fears you may have had before the school year started.
6. What did you expect before school started?
 7. How did you feel about your child starting Kindergarten?
 8. Did you have lots of questions about what Kindergarten would be like or did you feel comfortable or well-prepared?

Concerns about School:

9. Tell me about any concerns you had for *your child* when your child started school.
10. Tell me about any concerns you had for *yourself* when your child started school.
11. Tell me about any difficulties you faced during your child's transition to school.
12. Tell me about any concerns *you* had with communicating with the school.
13. Tell me about any concerns you had with *your child* communicating with the teachers and school staff.

Needs during transition to school:

14. What types of activities were offered to help you and your child start school?
15. How did you feel about the transition activities that were offered?
16. Did you attend the activities? Why or why not?
17. Tell me about *your child's needs* during the transition to school.
18. Tell me about your needs for *as a parent* during the transition to school.
19. What are the things you feel are most important to include in school transition activities?

Opportunities for involvement in school:

20. In your opinion, what do you think was the school's expectation of your involvement during the Kindergarten year? (What did the school expect you to do as a parent during the Kindergarten year?)

21. What were *your* expectations of being involved in school during your child's Kindergarten year?

22. How did the school try to involve you during the Kindergarten year? (i.e. teacher, school)

Culture and Expectations:

23. Did you feel welcome at the school right from the beginning? How so?

24. Do you feel valued at your child's school? Why or why not?

25. Do you feel like your race (being Latino) affects how teachers and school staff interact with you?

26. If you could have it any way that you want, what would you want to happen as your child transitioned to school?

27. If your child was beginning school in Mexico, how would it be?

28. Do you feel like what your child's teacher and the school are doing is aligned with what you believe about school? (e.g., what they are focused on in working with children, how they deal with things, and how they communicate with families)

Follow up: Are you changing a lot of what you do and think to match up with the school?

29. In your opinion, what is the school's role/job for your *child*?

30. In your opinion, what is the school's role/job for your *family*?

Closing:

31. What are your goals/hopes for your child?

32. How has school helped (or not) support these goals?

33. Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't yet talked about?

Thank you so much for your time and for talking with me today. I really appreciate it!

APPENDIX B
EXPERT E-MAIL INVITATION

Dear (expert's name),

I hope that you are doing well!

I am contacting you because you are considered to be an expert in the field of _____ (school transitions, Mexican immigrant families, etc.). I am currently conducting a research project to look at parents' experiences with their child's transition to Kindergarten by creating and piloting a newly revised measure intended to be relevant and reliable for use with Mexican immigrant parents.

To date, I have conducted in-depth interviews with 8 Mexican immigrant parents and have analyzed the data, which has helped inform the revision of an existing measure on parents' experiences with their children's transition to Kindergarten.

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to assist me with this research project by sharing your expertise and providing feedback (electronically) on the revised questionnaire, which may take approximately 1-2 hours.

Your participation is fully voluntary. If you are able to help me with this project by providing input, please let me know and I will send you more details.

Thank you in advance for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Jennifer Mendoza Beasley, Graduate Student Researcher
Phone: (336) 622-8282
E-mail: jmmendoz@uncg.edu

APPENDIX C

MEANING UNITS AND CATEGORIES

19 Meaning Units/Themes:

Cultural Beliefs:

Kindergarten as an event that has to happen

Cultural differences-schools and even broader context (towns, cities, etc.)

Goals for their children in future

Needs:

What they want from the school for the kids

What they want from the school for themselves

Knowing people (teachers or kids) prior to entry is helpful

Important to address the idea of the unknown in transition activities (i.e. navigating the school, where are the bathrooms, cafeteria, etc.)

Concerns:

Concerns – Food

Concerns – Bathrooms

Concerns – Bus

Involvement/Advice to others:

Routine is important for kids and parents

Parents must work together with school for the benefit of helping their children

School to home activities

(Satisfaction with) Communication

Communication and being listened to translates to calm/peaceful transition

Availability of Spanish speakers in schools

Knowledge/Information Gathering

English and Spanish (dual) language development

Using who is available as resources for information on school

Feeling welcome

Importance of the first contact being kind/accessible

Characteristics of teachers/staff that are important

APPENDIX D
LETTER TO PARENTS FOR FEIT-A

Fall 2013

Dear Parent,

I am contacting you because your child is in Kindergarten this year. As a graduate student researcher at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, I am conducting a research project to learn about how parents like you feel about different aspects of children's transition to school.

Participating in this research project involves completing the enclosed permission form and short survey about your experiences with the transition to school. All of the information collected as part of this research project will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law. This means that no one outside the research team will have access to your data, not even your child's teacher or school.

If you agree to participate in the research project and complete the attached permission form and survey, you will receive \$5 as a thank-you for your assistance. **To return the forms, please place the form and survey in the brown envelope, seal the envelope, and return to school with your child. Please send the forms back with your child within one week.** Your agreement to participate in this research project is completely voluntary.

Thank you for helping us to learn about your experiences during your child's transition to school.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Mendoza Beasley, Graduate Student Researcher
Phone: (336) 622-8282
E-mail: jmmendoz@uncg.edu

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Human Development and Family Studies
1000 Spring Garden Street
Greensboro, NC 27403

APPENDIX E

PARENT CONSENT FORM FOR FEIT-A

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT - SURVEY

Project Title: Parents' Experiences with their Children's Transition to School

Project Director: Jennifer Mendoza Beasley

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Danielle Crosby

Participant's Name: _____

What is the study about?

This is a research project. Your participation is voluntary. The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences that parents have during their children's transition to Kindergarten.

Why are you asking me?

You were selected as a possible participant because you are first generation Mexican and the parent of a Kindergarten child.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete the enclosed survey about your experiences during your child's transition to school which will take approximately 1 hour and then return it in the enclosed envelope.

What are the dangers to me?

The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants.

If you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Jennifer Mendoza Beasley who may be reached at (336) 622-8282 or at jmmendoz@uncg.edu or Dr. Danielle Crosby who may be reached at (336) 334-4671 or at dacrosby@uncg.edu

If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated, concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study please contact the Office of Research Integrity at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?

The benefits to society may include informing early childhood education about parents' experiences of their children's transition to school.

Are there any benefits to *me* for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits to you for your participation in this study.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you for participating in the study. You will get paid \$5 for participating in this study by filling out and returning this survey.

How will you keep my information confidential?

Your answers will not be shared with the school or any teachers. Codes will be assigned to your survey and your name will not be used. In any sort of report that is published, there will not be any information that will make it possible to identify parents or their children. Research records will be stored securely in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home office for three years after completion of the study and only the researchers conducting this study will have access to the records. All data including your survey will be destroyed after 3 years. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

What if I want to leave the study?

You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you do withdraw, it will not affect you in any way. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state.

What about new information/changes in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing this consent form you are agreeing that you have read it, or it has been read to you, that you fully understand the contents of this document, and you are openly willing to take part in this study. By signing this form, you are indicating that all of the questions you have at this time concerning this study have been answered and that you have been given contact information in case you have further questions. By signing this form, you are also agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and agree to participate, in this study described to you by Jennifer Mendoza Beasley.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX F

FEIT-A SURVEY

Please return by **Monday, Sept. 23rd** to your child's teacher. Thank you for your time!

Please tell us a little bit about your child by circling your response to the following questions.

1. Is this your first child beginning Kindergarten?
 - 0) No
 - 1) Yes
2. Is this your first child attending this school?
 - 0) No
 - 1) Yes
3. What type of child care or educational program was your child enrolled in last year?
 - 1) Child care program (in a center or home)
 - 2) Special Education preschool (3-5 years old)
 - 3) Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) in a public school
 - 4) Head Start
 - 5) Parents as Teachers program
 - 6) With a relative
 - 7) Stayed with mom or dad at home
4. How would you describe your language use with your child at home on a typical day?
 - 1) English only
 - 2) English and a little Spanish
 - 3) Spanish and a little English
 - 4) Mostly Spanish
 - 5) Both Spanish and English equally

Please indicate if you had any concerns about your child's "readiness" in each of the following areas as he/she transitioned to kindergarten by circling the number that corresponds to how concerned you were in each area.

	No Concerns	A few	Some	Many concerns
5. Academics (e.g. knowing the alphabet, recognizing numbers)	0	1	2	3

6. Difficulty controlling emotions and behavior	0	1	2	3
7. Following directions	0	1	2	3
8. Getting along with other children	0	1	2	3
9. Being respectful to the teacher	0	1	2	3
	No Concerns	A few	Some	Many concerns
10. Separating from family	0	1	2	3
11. Using the bathroom independently (e.g. finding where it is located, having accidents)	0	1	2	3
12. Communicating needs and wants in English	0	1	2	3
13. Eating the food provided by the school	0	1	2	3
14. Riding the bus	0	1	2	3
15. Getting into a routine (e.g. waking up early, going to bed early, etc.)	0	1	2	3
<i>Now, think about the concerns you had for <u>yourself as a parent</u> as your child transitioned to Kindergarten. Using the same scale, please indicate how concerned you were about each of the following areas.</i>				
	No Concerns	A few	Some	Many concerns
16. Helping my child prepare for the Kindergarten routine	0	1	2	3
17. Knowing what is required for kindergarten registration	0	1	2	3
18. Filling out paperwork and forms for Kindergarten	0	1	2	3
19. Helping my child with homework	0	1	2	3
20. Knowing where things are in the school (e.g. the classroom, the cafeteria, the office)	0	1	2	3
21. Knowing information about the bus such as when and where my child will be picked up	0	1	2	3

22. Knowing who to talk with about my questions/concerns	0	1	2	3
23. Communicating with teachers and school staff	0	1	2	3
24. Knowing the expectations for behavior for my child in kindergarten.	0	1	2	3
25. Knowing the expectations for academics for my child in kindergarten.	0	1	2	3

Thinking about the transition to Kindergarten, please tell us more about the things you wanted more information or help with. For each one, please tell us whether or not you wanted this information and then whether or not you received this during your child's transition by circling your response.

	Did Not Need	Needed Somewhat	Needed A Lot		Did you receive this? (Circle one)
26. Information on what to expect during your child's Kindergarten program (e.g. the process of kindergarten like homework, no nap, lining up, etc.)	0	1	2		Yes No
27. Information about your child's new teacher.	0	1	2		Yes No
28. Information about the role of each staff support person in the school (e.g. principal, counselor, etc.)	0	1	2		Yes No
29. Information about where things were in your child's new school (e.g. the classroom, the cafeteria, the office, the library, etc.)	0	1	2		Yes No
30. Information about Kindergarten academic expectations.	0	1	2		Yes No
31. Information about Kindergarten behavior expectations.	0	1	2		Yes No

32. Information on what types of activities to do at home with my child.	0	1	2		Yes	No
33. Information on how to motivate my child to be excited to go to Kindergarten.	0	1	2		Yes	No
34. Emotional support and encouragement from kindergarten and school staff.	0	1	2		Yes	No
35. Information on bilingual language development (e.g. what is best to do for children that speak both Spanish and English)	0	1	2		Yes	No
36. Information on how to be involved in the classroom during my child's Kindergarten year.	0	1	2		Yes	No
37. Information on how to be involved in my child's learning at home during the Kindergarten year.	0	1	2		Yes	No

This next set of questions asks about types of things or experiences you think are important for families when children begin Kindergarten. For each one, please tell us how important you think it is, and then indicate whether or not you had this experience during your child's transition to Kindergarten by circling your response.

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important		Did you have this? (Circle one)
38. Visit to your child's kindergarten classroom with your child.	0	1	2		Yes No
39. Visit to your child's school with your child.	0	1	2		Yes No
40. Meeting with school personnel about what to expect during the kindergarten year.	0	1	2		Yes No
41. Phone call from your child's kindergarten teacher over the summer.	0	1	2		Yes No

42. Home visit from your child's kindergarten teacher over the summer.	0	1	2		Yes	No
43. Written communication (letter/e-mail) from your child's kindergarten teacher or school regarding kindergarten information.	0	1	2		Yes	No
44. Kindergarten Registration meeting with principal, kindergarten teachers, and other kindergarten children and their parents.	0	1	2		Yes	No
45. Kindergarten Open House right after school begins.	0	1	2		Yes	No
	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important		Did you have this? (Circle one)	
46. A get together (or social gathering) with other children and families from your child's classroom at the beginning of the year.	0	1	2		Yes	No
47. An information packet with ideas for how families can help prepare children for kindergarten.	0	1	2		Yes	No
48. An information packet with ideas for how families can help prepare children to succeed in kindergarten.	0	1	2		Yes	No
49. Summer classes for your child to get an idea of what kindergarten is about.	0	1	2		Yes	No
50. Caring teachers and school staff.	0	1	2		Yes	No
51. School staff that speak my language.	0	1	2		Yes	No
52. Interpreters are available.	0	1	2		Yes	No

This next set of questions asks about your satisfaction with your experiences during your child's transition to Kindergarten. For each item, please tell us if you were not satisfied, somewhat satisfied, or very satisfied by circling your response.

	Not Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
53. My <i>child's</i> experience transitioning to kindergarten.	0	1	2
54. My experience <i>as a parent</i> with my child's transition to kindergarten.	0	1	2
	Not satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied
55. The <i>teacher(s')</i> treatment of my child.	0	1	2
56. The <i>teacher(s')</i> treatment of me.	0	1	2
57. The <i>teacher(s')</i> involvement in making the transition to Kindergarten a positive experience for my child.	0	1	2
58. The <i>teacher(s')</i> involvement in making the transition to Kindergarten a positive experience for me.	0	1	2
59. The school's involvement/activities to make the transition to Kindergarten a positive experience for my child.	0	1	2
60. The communication I received from the school about my child's transition to kindergarten.	0	1	2
61. How school staff listened and answered my questions about kindergarten.	0	1	2
62. The friendliness of school staff to my child.	0	1	2
63. The friendliness of school staff to my family.	0	1	2

64. What parts of the transition to kindergarten do you think went well for your *child*?

65. What parts of the transition to kindergarten do you think went well for *you*?

Please tell us a bit about you and your family by circling the best response.

66. Are you your child's primary caregiver?

- 0) No
- 1) Yes

67. What is your gender?

- 1) Male
- 2) Female

68. What is your age? _____

69. What is your ethnic background?

- 1) White/Caucasian
- 2) Black/African American
- 3) Hispanic/Latino
- 4) Asian
- 5) Mixed
- 6) Other

70. Where were you born?

- 1) United States
- 2) Mexico
- 3) Other

71. What is your marital status?

- 1) Married or living with partner
- 2) Separated
- 3) Divorced
- 4) Single
- 5) Other _____

72. Did you attend any schooling in the US?

- 0) No
- 1) Yes

73. What is the highest grade you have completed? (1-12=HS; 13-16=College; 16+ Post-college)

- 1) Elementary school
- 2) Middle school
- 3) High school
- 4) GED
- 5) 2-year college
- 6) 4-year college
- 7) Post college

74. What is the highest educational degree you have obtained?

- 1) None
- 2) HS Diploma/GED
- 3) Vocational Degree/Certificate
- 4) Associates Degree (2-year college degree)
- 5) Bachelor's Degree (4-year college degree)
- 6) Master's Degree
- 7) Doctorate (e.g., Ph.D.)
- 8) Professional Degree (MD)

75. What is your annual total family income? If unsure, how much do you make per month? _____

- 1) \$14,999 or less
- 2) \$15,000-24,999
- 3) \$25,000-34,999
- 4) \$35,000-44,999
- 5) \$45,000-54,999

- 6) \$55,000-64,999
- 7) \$65,000-74,999
- 8) \$75,000-84,999
- 9) \$85,000-99,999
- 10) \$100,000+

76. Does your family or child qualify for government aid programs (e.g., cash assistance, food stamps, SSI, Medicaid)?

- 0) No
- 1) Yes
- 2) Don't Know

APPENDIX G

PARENT FEIT-A SURVEY FOLLOW-UP LETTER

Dear Parent,

Recently, I sent you a letter and a survey in a brown envelope through your child at school. The letter and survey were about a research project that is being done at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to learn about parents' experiences with their children's transition to school.

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. This follow-up note is to let you know that it is not too late to turn in the survey and permission form if you would like to do so.

To return them, please place the form and survey in the **brown envelope** that was provided with the original letter, seal the envelope, and return to school with your child. Once the forms are returned, you will receive \$5 as a thank-you for your assistance.

Thank you for considering this request and helping us learn about your experiences with your child's transition to school.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Mendoza Beasley, Graduate Student Researcher
Phone: (336) 622-8282
E-mail: jmmendoz@uncg.edu

APPENDIX H

TABLES

Table 2

Descriptive Characteristics of Each Variable in the FEIT-A

	N	Mean	SD	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
Parents' Concerns for Their Child						
5. Academics	42	1.04	0.85	0-3	0.15	1.06
6. Difficulty controlling emotions and behavior	43	0.55	0.66	0-2	0.79	-0.40
7. Following directions	43	0.58	0.76	0-3	1.22	1.11
8. Getting along with other children	41	0.39	0.7	0-3	2.00	4.11
9. Being respectful to the teacher	42	0.3	0.71	0-3	2.39	5.19
10. Separating from family	44	0.88	0.92	0-3	0.98	0.37
11. Using the bathroom independently	43	0.51	0.76	0-3	1.45	1.55
12. Communicating needs and wants in Eng.	44	1.02	1.04	0-3	0.72	-0.62
13. Eating the food provided by the school	43	0.81	1	0-3	1.12	2.41
14. Riding the bus	43	0.6	0.92	0-3	1.45	1.10
15. Getting into a routine	44	0.88	0.89	0-3	0.63	-0.51
Parents' Concerns for Themselves as a Parent						
16. Helping my child prepare for the routine	44	0.63	0.74	0-3	1.06	0.91
17. Knowing what is required for registration	43	0.51	0.7	0-3	1.46	2.48
18. Filling out paperwork and forms	44	0.54	0.81	0-3	1.57	2.04
19. Helping my child with homework	44	0.59	0.78	0-3	1.18	0.73
20. Knowing where things are in the school	43	0.48	0.59	0-2	0.76	-0.33
21. Knowing information about the bus	44	0.56	0.75	0-3	1.26	1.19
22. Knowing who to talk with	43	0.74	0.72	0-2	0.43	-0.96
23. Communicating with teachers	44	0.61	0.68	0-2	0.68	-0.61
24. Knowing the expectations for behavior	44	0.68	0.67	0-2	0.48	-0.71

25. Knowing the expectations for academics	44	0.7	0.66	0-2	0.41	-0.70
Parents' Perceived Needs						
26. Information on what to expect	34	0.67	0.68	0-2	0.51	-0.70
27. Information about your child's new teacher	39	0.66	0.73	0-2	0.63	-0.86
	N	Mean	SD	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
28. Information about the role of each staff	33	0.6	0.74	0-2	0.80	0.40
29. Information about where things were	35	0.4	0.49	0-1	0.42	-1.93
30. Information about K academics	34	0.82	0.67	0-2	0.22	-0.69
31. Information about K behavior	33	0.66	0.54	0-2	-0.09	-0.74
32. Information on what activities do at home	33	0.84	0.54	0-2	-0.04	0.16
33. Information on how to motivate	32	0.84	0.67	0-2	0.19	-0.70
34. Emotional Support and encouragement	36	0.52	0.65	0-2	0.86	-0.25
35. Information on bilingual language	32	0.93	0.75	0-2	0.10	-1.20
36. Information on how be involved classrm.	32	0.9	0.68	0-2	0.12	-0.76
37. Information on how to be involved learning at home	32	1	0.71	0-2	0.00	-0.96
Parents' Receipt of Transition Support						
26. Information on what to expect	31	0.87	0.34	0-1	-2.32	3.64
27. Information about your child's new teacher	27	0.74	0.44	0-1	-1.16	-0.70
28. Information about the role of each staff	26	0.57	0.5	0-1	-0.33	-2.05
29. Information about where things were	26	0.92	0.27	0-1	-3.37	10.15
30. Information about K academics	27	0.88	0.32	0-1	-2.62	5.26
31. Information about K behavior	28	0.89	0.31	0-1	-2.68	5.61
32. Information on what activities do at home	29	0.82	0.38	0-1	-1.83	1.44
33. Information on how to motivate	30	0.73	0.44	0-1	-1.11	-0.82
34. Emotional Support and encouragement	25	0.64	0.48	0-1	-0.62	-0.82
35. Information on bilingual language	30	0.73	0.44	0-1	-1.11	-0.82

36. Information on how be involved classrm.	31	0.8	0.4	0-1	-1.63	0.70
37. Information on how to be involved learning at home	31	0.8	0.4	0-1	-1.63	0.70
Parents' Beliefs about What is Important						
38. Visit to your child's K classroom	34	1.67	0.53	0-2	-1.40	1.16
	N	Mean	SD	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
39. Visit to your child's school	35	1.68	0.58	0-2	-1.73	2.18
40. Meeting with school personnel	35	1.71	0.45	1-2	-0.99	-1.08
41. Phone call from your child's K teacher	34	1.44	0.66	0-2	-0.77	-0.38
42. Home visit from your child's K teacher	33	0.93	0.74	0-2	0.10	-1.14
43. Written communication (letter/e-mail)	32	1.75	0.43	1-2	-1.21	-0.57
44. Kindergarten Registration meeting	35	1.51	0.61	0-2	-0.87	-0.15
45. Kindergarten Open House	33	1.75	0.43	1-2	-1.26	-0.44
46. A get together (or social gathering)	33	1.42	0.56	0-2	-0.25	-0.89
47. An information packet how families can prepare children	33	1.78	0.41	1-2	-1.47	0.18
48. An information packet how families can prepare children to succeed	33	1.75	0.43	1-2	-1.26	-0.44
49. Summer classes	34	1.47	0.66	0-2	-0.88	-0.24
50. Caring teachers and school staff.	35	1.8	0.4	1-2	-1.56	0.48
51. School staff that speak my language.	36	1.88	0.39	0-2	-3.87	15.55
52. Interpreters are available.	31	1.93	0.24	1-2	-3.72	12.71
Parents' Transition Experiences						
38. Visit to your child's K classroom	33	0.75	0.43	0-1	-1.26	-0.44
39. Visit to your child's school	31	0.83	0.37	0-1	-1.93	1.86
40. Meeting with school personnel	31	0.7	0.46	0-1	-0.97	-1.13
41. Phone call from your child's K teacher	31	0.12	0.34	0-1	2.32	3.64
42. Home visit from your child's K teacher	32	0.06	0.24	0-1	3.79	13.22
43. Written communication (letter/e-mail)	33	0.75	0.43	0-1	-1.26	-0.44
44. Kindergarten Registration meeting	30	0.7	0.46	0-1	-0.92	-1.24
45. Kindergarten Open House	32	0.93	0.24	0-1	-3.79	13.22
46. A get together (or social gathering)	33	0.48	0.5	0-1	0.06	-2.12

47. An information packet how families can prepare children	33	0.72	0.45	0-1	-1.07	-0.91
48. An information packet how families can prepare children to succeed	33	0.69	0.46	0-1	-0.89	-1.27
49. Summer classes	31	0.32	0.47	0-1	0.79	-1.46
50. Caring teachers and school staff.	29	0.68	0.47	0-1	-0.86	-1.34
51. School staff that speak my language.	32	0.96	0.17	0-1	-5.65	32.00
	N	Mean	SD	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
52. Interpreters are available.	32	0.84	0.36	0-1	-1.98	2.07
Parents' Satisfaction						
53. My <i>child's</i> experience transitioning	44	1.68	0.47	1-2	-0.80	-1.41
54. My experience <i>as a parent</i> with my child's transition	44	1.63	0.48	1-2	-0.58	-1.73
55. The <i>teacher(s')</i> treatment of my child.	44	1.79	0.4	1-2	-1.51	0.31
56. The <i>teacher(s')</i> treatment of me.	43	1.79	0.46	0-2	-2.19	4.40
57. The <i>teacher(s')</i> involvement in a positive experience for my child.	44	1.81	0.39	1-2	-1.70	0.96
58. The <i>teacher(s')</i> involvement in a positive experience for me.	44	1.79	0.4	1-2	-1.51	0.31
59. The school's involvement/activities	43	1.74	0.44	1-2	-1.16	-0.68
60. The communication I received	44	1.59	0.54	0-2	-0.83	-0.40
61. How school staff listened and answered	44	1.63	0.48	1-2	-0.58	-1.73
62. Friendliness of school staff to child.	44	1.7	0.46	1-2	-0.92	-1.19
63. Friendliness of school staff to my family.	44	1.68	0.47	1-2	-0.80	-1.41